



THE INDEPENDENT

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Urban smog kills 24,000 Britons every year

Pollution caused mainly by traffic fumes kills up to 24,000 people prematurely each year. **Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, examines the findings of an official report which will increase the pressure on the Government to cut car use.**

When the smog hangs heavy in the city it is poisoning the population that breathes it. The first report to measure the effects of air pollution in Britain concludes that its immediate effect is to hasten the deaths of between 12,000 and 24,000 vulnerable people and to trigger up to 24,000 hospital admissions each year.

This is certain to be an underestimate, because the report does not take account of the long-term effects of living in polluted cities. That is to be the subject of a further study.

The findings, by the Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, a government advisory body, indicate a more serious problem than expected. Launching the document yesterday, Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, flanked by Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, and Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, said: "This report clearly confirms that air pollution damages health."

The findings triggered immediate demands for a cut in road traffic. The British Medical Association warned: "The grim reaper comes early on days of heavy air pollution." Friends of the Earth said the deaths figure was "extremely alarming" and the British Lung Foundation described it as "very serious."

Professor Stephen Holgate, chairman of the committee, said he had been surprised by the size of the effect. Speaking after the launch, he said that although the worst effects of pollution were on those who were frail, elderly or sick, there was growing evidence that healthy individuals were affected, too.

"Respiratory infections are getting worse. Air pollution reduces the capacity

of the lung to combat viruses and possibly bacteria. Whether this is because of air pollution outside or inside the home needs to be sorted out," he said.

Sir Kenneth Calman sought to reduce alarm by emphasising that it was people who were already seriously ill with chronic respiratory disease who were most at risk. "They are not dying because of air pollution, they are dying because the contribution of air pollution to their ill health tips the balance."

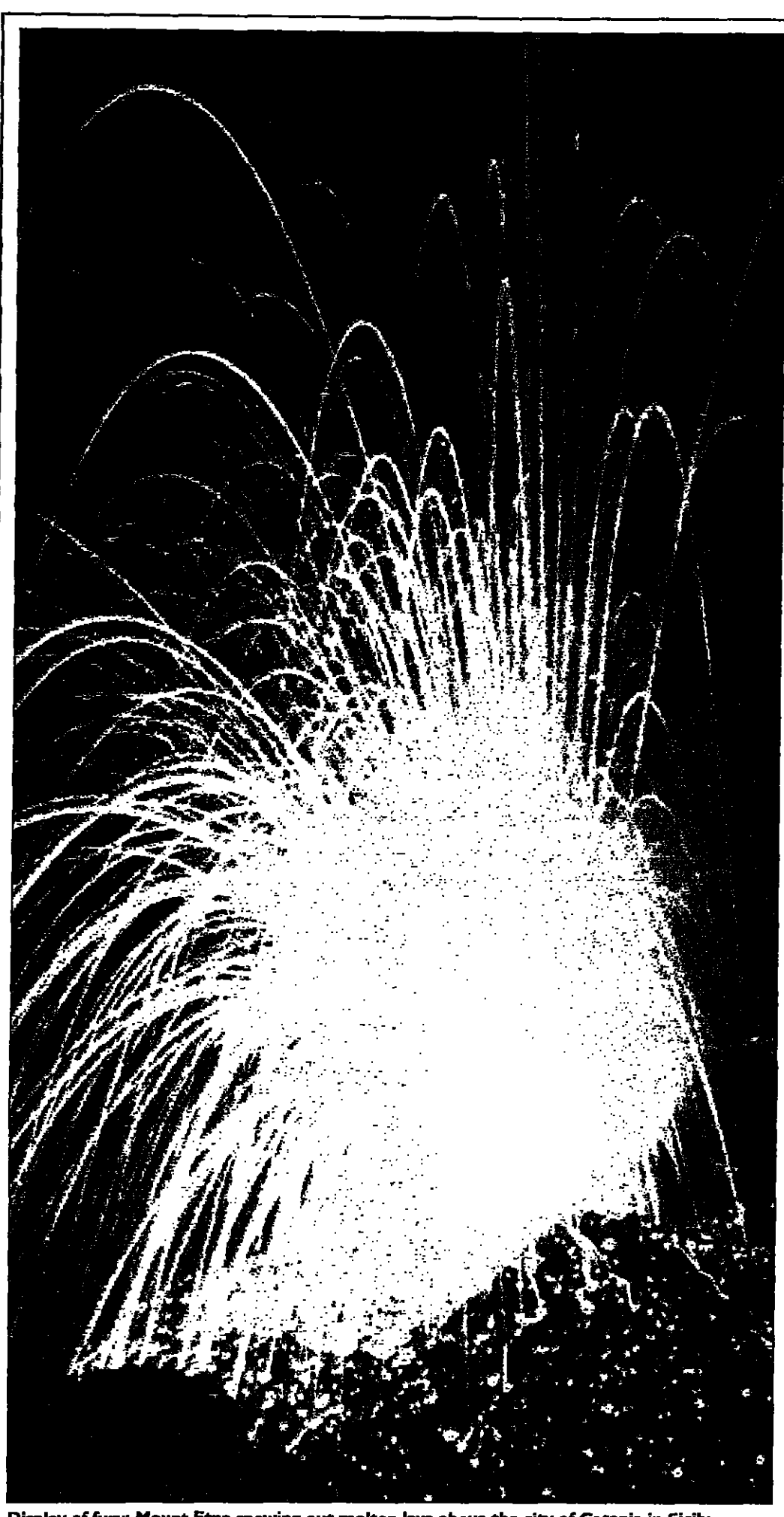
He said they were not necessarily extra deaths or hospital admissions but ones that had been "brought forward", in some cases by a few days, but in other cases by a "somewhat longer period." He compared the effect with that of the cold in winter, which is linked with 30,000 extra deaths between October and March.

Mr Meacher said the findings contained a "major lesson" for transport. A white paper will set out proposals to reduce car use and technical measures to cut pollution. The AA, the motoring organisation, said drivers should not be made scapegoats for poor air quality and claimed that toxic exhaust gases were down 22 per cent compared with 1992.

The report, *Quantification of the Effects of Air Pollution on Health in the UK*, says pollution has three effects: many chemicals, such as sulphur dioxide and ozone, act as irritants to the bronchial tubes of the lung. Some, such as nitrogen dioxide and ozone, release substances that damage the lung lining. Together these cause inflammation, irritation and make the lung less efficient at fighting infection.

Particulates, the tiny particles produced mainly by the burning of diesel fuel, are the most dangerous. The smallest, known as PM10s, are drawn deep into the lungs where they are absorbed, causing damage to tissue as they are processed. They can trigger blood clots.

Professor Jon Ayres, a member of the committee, said it was likely that pollution had long-term effects on health but these remained to be proved. "What we would like to know is if you live in a town like London all your life, is it significantly shortened compared with living in a rural area. That is the big question."



Display of fury: Mount Etna spewing out molten lava above the city of Catania in Sicily yesterday. Earthquakes rattling the volcano have raised fears that a true eruption is imminent - the last major one was six years ago. Photograph: Fabrizio Villa/AP

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TOKEN 5, THE EYE, PAGE 1
INDEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY TOKEN COLLECT

TODAY'S NEWS

Ulster talks backed
The Northern Ireland political talks surmounted another significant hurdle when all parties agreed to use Monday's London-Dublin document as a basis for negotiation. But Sinn Féin made it clear that this did not imply approval of its contents. Page 4

More time for three Rs
The Government pressed ahead with its campaign to boost the basics in education by making more room in the primary school day for the three Rs. Schools are to be permitted to spend less time on some compulsory subjects - like history, geography and design and technology. Page 5

Docklands bomb trial
It was "little short of a miracle" that an enormous lorry bomb claimed only two lives when it exploded at Canary Wharf in London Docklands, an Old Bailey jury was told. Two men from Northern Ireland men deny conspiring to cause the explosion. Page 9

High cost of Tony's VIPs
Tony Blair's government makes more use of Heathrow Airport's VIP facilities than its Tory predecessor did, it emerged last night. The cost of suites mounted to £1.6m in the seven months from May. Page 6

President Blair trumps Brown on welfare

Ministers expressed astonishment yesterday at allegations that Gordon Brown wants to curb child benefit for the better-off - in defiance of a Labour manifesto pledge. **Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports that it will fuel No 10 suspicion about the Chancellor's ambitions, and analyses the edgy relationship between the Downing Street neighbours.**



Head on: The Prime Minister (left) and his Chancellor may not see eye to eye on welfare

Tony Blair is expected by Cabinet colleagues to use his new Cabinet committee on welfare reform to assert his authority over the Chancellor of the Exchequer - who has told friends that he is "Prime Minister" to the Blair "presidency".

The real Prime Minister, who returned to Britain from Tokyo last night, is to open a national campaign for welfare reform in the West Midlands tomorrow night.

In a rare in-depth Cabinet discussion of a single issue before Christmas - a reaction to the shock Commons revolt over the cut in lone parents' benefits - it was decided that Mr Blair should chair a new

committee on welfare reform, to give coherence to a policy that was in danger of developing piecemeal.

Some Cabinet colleagues saw that as a direct slap-down for Mr Brown, who was the motive force behind the curbs on lone parent benefit, introduced by Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security.

But there was dismay yesterday that, for the second time in a month, well-informed

"Treasury sources" had floated suggestions that Mr Brown was planning to tax child benefit, along with a revival of controversial plans to remove the benefit for 16 to 18-year-olds in full-time schooling.

One report said the taxation of child benefit, "a move that could be announced as early as the March Budget", could mean better-off mothers losing more than £1,000 a year.

The manifesto says: "We

are committed to retain universal child benefit where it is universal today - from birth to age 16 - and to update it at least in line with prices." Taxation, even for the better-off, would be a clear breach of that pledge.

The Treasury-inspired reports, described by one minister as unhelpful mischief-making, come on top of last week's disclosures that Mr Brown believed Mr Blair had betrayed a personal pact to stand

aside in any leadership contest.

Mr Blair told BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost* on Sunday that there was no secret pact, and sources close to the Prime Minister said it was nonsense to suggest that he could have beaten Mr Blair in the 1994 contest to succeed John Smith.

A source close to the Chancellor yesterday protested that paranoia was so great over Mr Brown's alleged campaign to increase his party power-base that complaints had been made about the number of meetings he was holding with MPs.

However, *The Independent* has been told that after one No 11 party for MPs, a dissident backbencher had thanked Mr Brown for a wonderful party, to which the Chancellor had replied: "The Labour Party? Yes, it was a wonderful party, wasn't it?"

Mr Blair said on Sunday that Mr Brown was one of his "closest, closest friends", and if people were hoping that the Tory history of prime ministers falling out with their chancellors was going to be repeated, they were in for a disappointment.

Nevertheless, it is known that Mr Blair has on a number of occasions imposed his will upon the Chancellor.

He vetoed Mr Brown's pre-election demand for a new higher top rate of income tax; he blocked a manifesto commitment to abolish child benefit for the over-16 school children and he insisted that Mr Brown should make a Commons statement ruling out membership of the European single currency before the next election.

One of the Cabinet-level complaints made about Mr Brown is that he runs economic policy far too close to his chest. There were real fears that he was exerting the same close control over welfare reform.

Now that Mr Blair has decided to put the issue on the cabinet table - open for genuine debate and discussion, with a public input from his round-Britain tour - Ministers will not hesitate to side with him against the Chancellor, who has few Cabinet friends and a number of powerful enemies.

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COLUMN ONE

Parma drama brings a slice of life to court

Italian Parma ham, the most expensive product to come from a pig, was at the centre of a High Court battle yesterday over the vexed question of whether the traditional antipasto may legitimately be sliced in Wiltshire.

The Parma Ham Consortium, which represents Italian producers, is seeking an injunction to prevent the Asda supermarket chain from selling its cut-price meat, on the grounds that it is sliced and packaged in Chippenham rather than in its Italian area of origin.

According to Italian law, the ham must be fully prepared for sale in the Parma region, a narrow area of northern Italy between the Taro and Baganza rivers, under the supervision of the Parma Ham Consortium.

Lawyers for Asda, though, argued that since the law had not been incorporated into EU legislation, it was not enforceable in Britain. The retailer described the case as a "barmy High Court Parma drama".

Deputy Judge Lawrence Collins QC was told that the supermarket, which undercuts its nearest rival by 78p per gram, imports legs of ham which have been produced from Parma pigs according to the traditional method, by Fiorucci, one of the largest companies and a member of the Consortium.

The only difference between Asda's product and that of other British retailers was that it was prepared for sale here after being imported from Italy, the court heard.

Steven Cain, the company's marketing director, said: "To suggest that this ham is inferior because it is sliced and packed in the UK must be a joke. Whether we slice our ham in Parma, Preston, Peterborough or Perth is completely irrelevant."

Mr Cain said the Consortium's argument amounted to saying that Scottish beef ceased to be Scottish if it was sliced in Southampton, or that the origin of Jersey potatoes altered if they were boiled in Blackpool.

Parma ham, which has a distinctive sweet taste, comes from pigs bred



On the hoof: But is Asda's ham the genuine article?

in the area where Parmesan cheese was originally produced. They are fed mainly on whey.

The case, which continues today, is the latest in which legal action has been taken to protect the production methods or names of gastronomic delicacies.

Last year, the Scotch Whisky Association sued a distillery on the Isle of Man, claiming that the liquor it produced – called Manx Whisky – was not the genuine article because it was colourless, an effect achieved by distilling it after it had matured.

The Scotch whisky industry has also taken action against producers in Japan, Taiwan and France, anxious to protect a name that is worth £2.3bn a year in exports.

In Spain, a series of lawsuits has led to a strict definition of exactly who can give the name sherry to their fortified wine.

Producers in the Champagne region of France, meanwhile, have successfully prevented makers of sparkling wines from using the word champagne on their labels. It has launched more than 60 actions in England alone.

Even a Surrey vineyard that made non-alcoholic elderflower "champagne", a traditional country drink, felt the wrath of the mighty French industry, which took the family firm all the way to the Court of Appeal before securing victory.

A couple of years ago, Coca-Cola forced Sainsbury's to change the labelling on its own-brand cola, on the grounds that it was too similar to the original. Sainsbury's also bowed to pressure to change the appearance of its own-brand Full Roast coffee jars after complaints from Nestlé about their similarity to Nescafé.

Tesco, too, has been the subject of complaints, from Kellogg's about the supermarket's similarly-packaged own-label cornflakes and about a low-fat spread called Unbelievable, which it brought out after Unilever launched a new spread called I Can't Believe It's Not Butter.

There was heated discussion in 1991 about whether the Jaffa Cake should more properly be classified as a biscuit. Customs and Excise officers took the manufacturers, United Biscuits, to court, arguing that, as a biscuit, the Jaffa Cake should attract VAT. But the judge said he was not convinced that it was not a cake, so it continues to be zero-rated. — Kathy Marks

PEOPLE



Shirley Bassey: Admitted pushing her long-serving aide in South African hotel room

Shirley Bassey accused of anti-Semitic remark

Singer Shirley Bassey slapped and insulted her personal assistant during a row in a hotel room, a court heard yesterday. Hilary Levy, 44, who had worked for the singer for 15 years, claimed she was sacked by Miss Bassey after a dispute over working hours.

Miss Levy told Brentford County Court, west London, that an angry Miss Bassey hit her on the back and called her a "Jewish bitch" after consuming "a fair amount of champagne". Miss Levy, of Mill Hill, north London, said had been asking for a few hours off the next day, following a late-night dinner, when the argument broke out at a hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, on 10 December, 1993.

Dressed in chocolate-coloured fur hat and matching coat, Miss Bassey, represented by Mr Philip Kolvin, sat in court listening to the evidence.

Miss Levy is suing Miss Bassey for breach of contract and claiming a balance of £7,650 for earnings she lost during a tour of the Far East.

Miss Bassey denied hitting Miss Levy – although she admitted pushing her during the argument. The star, who lives in Monte Carlo, also denied sacking Miss Levy and calling her a "bitch".

She told the court she was angry after Miss Levy slammed her bedroom door in the hotel.

"I went after her into her bedroom. I was pointing my finger at her, saying 'Don't you dare slam the door in my face again,'" Miss Bassey told the court.

Asked whether she hit Miss Levy, she said: "No, I was waving my finger at her and was amazed when she said 'Do not hit me'. She was hysterical, she was screaming... she had been acting strange all evening. I wanted to know why she was so angry."

Miss Bassey then admitted she had pushed Miss Levy. She said: "I pushed her here [pointing to her left shoulder]. I did not slap her... I pushed her."

The singer claimed she had smiled as she left the room, and said: "As I walked out I said 'You are a spoilt Jewish princess'. I certainly did not call her a bitch. I do not use words like that."

Miss Bassey added that the word "princess" was a showbusiness term for someone acting as a prima donna, and said she had been called that herself.

She strongly denied it was an anti-Semitic comment and said she had lots of Jewish friends and associates.

Graca Machel says she won't marry Mandela

In a rare interview Graca Machel, President Nelson Mandela's "girlfriend", yesterday dashed the hopes of romantics all over the world. Despite persistent rumours, she would not, she said, be marrying President Mandela, even though people – including Archbishop Desmond Tutu – claimed they were setting a bad example.

But the disappointment for those who like a happy ending was tempered by Mrs Machel's public declaration of love. It was in marked contrast to her initial coyness when their relationship became public just over a year ago, after the president divorced his second wife, Winnie.

"I think we are okay like this," she said, blushing, in an interview



in the Johannesburg Star. "I know many people are concerned that we are sending the wrong message to young people. But we are two grown-up people who love each other."

Mrs Machel, 52, touchingly describes the gulf between the myth and reality of Mandela. The man with the tough public face she said had been her hero. But she fell in love with a man who was really "simple, humble and soft."

During separations the couple phone each other every day. Mrs Machel is looking forward to Mandela's retirement as president in 1999. "He never had a normal family life," she says. "I want to help him do all the things he loves as a human being and not what he is expected to do."

"You see, we don't have so much time ahead of us so we try to spend as much as we can together."

— Mary Braid, Johannesburg

Branagh goes sci-fi with 'Trainspotting' team Dean gives feuding Lincoln a fresh start

Kenneth Branagh is on the point of signing up to star in the latest film by the *Trainspotting* trio of director Danny Boyle, producer Andrew Macdonald and writer John Hodge.

Branagh is set to star in *Alien Love Triangle*, a sci-fi comedy filmed in three parts that starts shooting at Elstree Studios in February. The segment filmed by Boyle and friends will tell the tale of a man who discovers that his wife is in fact a male from another planet.

The film is being produced by Miramax, the art-house subsidiary of Disney, which set up its own UK studio last year under the former head of Channel 4 films, David Aukin.

Alien Love Triangle will be shot in three separate pieces by different directing and writing teams in a similar way to the Eighties film *New York Stories* which was made in different parts by directors including Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese. The other two directing and writing teams are yet to be confirmed.

Branagh will also star in the new Robert Altman film, *The Gingerbread Man*, which has been written by John Grisham and will be released in the UK in June.

— Paul McCann, Media Correspondent

A new Dean of Lincoln was appointed yesterday with the brief of "drawing a line" under a decade of controversy at the city's cathedral.

The Venerable Alexander Knight, currently Archdeacon of Basingstoke and Canon Residentiary of Winchester Cathedral, said he was "aware of the past" but was going to "look to the future".

The cathedral's recent history did not deter him. "I am a team player and I hope to use my experience to establish good relations between the cathedral and the diocese. That is what we must work at."

Last October the Very Rev Brandon Jackson resigned following a bitter feud with the cathedral's Sub-Dean, Canon Rex Davis. Canon Davis is still in post, but was in Australia for a family funeral yesterday when the announcement was made. Trouble between the two men began in the late 1980s. Dr Jackson was later accused of sexual harassment by a female verger, but acquitted by a church court.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, intervened last year, urging both Dr Jackson and Canon Davis to resign. The deadlock was broken in July when Dr Jackson announced his resignation.

— Clare Garner

UPDATE

PROPERTY

House prices continue recovery

House prices are almost back to the peak of the spring and early summer of 1989, the Halifax reported yesterday.

In its official 1997 fourth-quarter house bulletin, the Halifax said prices rose by 1.1 per cent during the last three months of 1997, similar to the rise in the previous quarter. Earlier this month, the banking group revealed that prices fell in December for the first time since last January, although it believed they would continue to rise for the rest of the year. In its monthly index, Halifax found the average price of a house dropped by 0.2 per cent – marking a slowdown of annual house price inflation to the lowest rate since June 1996. Inflation dropped from 6.1 per cent to 4.3 per cent.

Halifax said the figures did not mark an end to the recovery in house prices because the slight drop followed a sharp rise in November, when prices shot up 0.9 per cent. "We continue to believe that the modest recovery started in 1997 will continue into 1998 and that house prices will end the year around 5 per cent higher than their present level."

During 1997, prices rose by 6.3 per cent, up from 4.5 per cent in 1996. In the last quarter of the year, the average price was £69,220, up from £65,674 in the final three months of 1996. But the Halifax said the UK picture continued to hide regional variations, with prices rising fastest in the South.

ENVIRONMENT

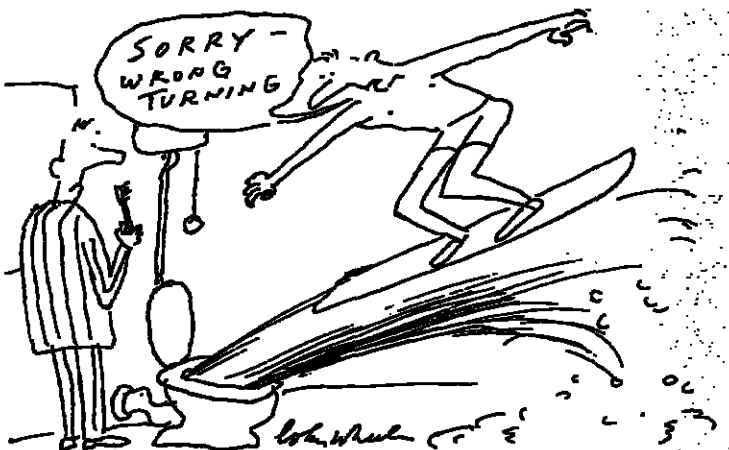
Surfers given pledge on sewage

The Government today pledged to investigate surfers' fears over germs in seawater, after MPs warned that the growing popularity of the sport could pose health risks.

Michael Meacher, the environment minister, said that before the peak holiday season he would "review" the level of waste treatment that companies use. His promise came as it emerged that some use the most intensive and expensive treatment for only part of the year – although others might be prepared to keep it in use in all 12 months.

Campaigners claim swallowing seawater leads to stomach upsets and sore throats and that viruses are not killed by routine treatment.

Mr Meacher told a Commons environment sub-committee: "Secondary treatment does provide a higher level of protection all year round... but we are talking about tertiary treatment and whether that should be turned off for part of the year... We have to achieve a balance between cost and public health and I agree that public health must be dominant."



LIFESTYLE

Students to get drinking lesson

The drinks industry watchdog is planning to target students in a new campaign to encourage "sensible drinking".

The Portman Group is teaming up with the National Union of Students to reinforce messages about safe drinking levels. The campaign, to be launched next month, will focus on raising awareness of how many units of alcohol different drinks contain and on government guidelines for sticking to 21 units a week for women and 28 for men.

The new initiative comes as three more drinks companies join the group, which is funded by the industry to promote sensible drinking.

Bacardi-Martini, HP Bulmer and Campbell Distillers and Pernod Ricard join the industry's largest companies Allied Domecq, Bass, Diageo, Scottish & Newcastle, Seagram and Whitehead. It means the group now represents 95 per cent of the industry.

Group director Jean Coussins said the increased membership was a vote of confidence in its policies and would add weight to new initiatives.

HEALTH

Doctors see little future for NHS

More than three-quarters of doctors are pessimistic about the future of the NHS, according to a survey. As the NHS enters its 50th anniversary year, almost 90 per cent of GPs and 74 per cent of hospital doctors think that a true National Health Service will not exist in 50 years' time.

The survey of more than 150 hospital doctors and 100 GPs by the *British Medical Association News Review* also found that the majority of doctors thought that the founding principles of the NHS – a comprehensive service, free at point of delivery and paid for by taxation – had been eroded during the past 50 years.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.45	Italy (lira)	2,846
Austria (schillings)	20.24	Japan (yen)	23.41
Belgium (francs)	59.49	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.27	Netherlands (guilders)	3.24
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.96
Denmark (kroner)	11.03	Portugal (escudos)	293.15
France (francs)	9.64	Spain (pesetas)	243.67
Germany (marks)	2.89	Sweden (kroner)	12.79
Greece (drachmes)	457.95	Switzerland (francs)	2.35
Hong Kong (\$)	12.21	Turkey (lira)	333,868
Ireland (pounds)	1.15	USA (\$)	1.59

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

7.30 FOR 8

by Chris Priestley

ZITS

by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 1998

Sex and shopping: Why women still get a raw deal when it comes to paying

Women can no longer be charged more than men in New York for items such as haircuts and dry cleaning, after the city authority outlawed 'gender pricing'. But here in Britain, women still pay more than men for many everyday services. Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent and Rosa Prince investigate why there's no such thing as a cheap woman.

Sex and shopping have long been linked in most women's minds, but never quite so literally. New York City has followed California in outlawing gender discrimination in pricing.

Put simply this means hairdressing salons will be unable to have prices which distinguish between men and women or face a \$500 (£300) fine. The same goes for dry cleaners who can no longer charge more for a blouse than a shirt.

However, here in Britain, it's still hard to be a woman. Technically section 29 of the Sex Discrimination Act outlaws gender discrimination on goods and services. In practice, a spokeswoman explains it can be difficult to prove. "Many shops charge women higher prices because they say it costs more in labour and overheads. It's



Cut price: The National Hairdressers' Federation says that women's hair needs more styling than men's

Photograph: David Rose

very difficult to prove. Manufacturers and retailers say different prices for men and women are due to different costs in manufacturing or provision of services and so the Sex Discrimination Act is unlikely to apply.

A spokeswoman from the Consumers' Association said that they had done no research into the area of gender pricing but added that she felt "it should be part of our agenda".

Ray Seymour, general secretary of the National Hairdressers' Federation, countered yesterday that higher prices in the sa-

lons were justified. "The basic situation is that it does cost more to cut ladies' hair than men's," he said.

"Most ladies' hair is below the ears, is longer than men's and needs more styling. In the same way, the cost of cutting a bald man's hair is the same as anyone else even though he has less hair."

Introducing similar measures in Britain he feels would be disastrous: "You can get more men passing over a seat than women in an hour. So if you're only cutting women's hair you have less customers. It would hit the salons hard. They couldn't

afford to bring the prices down so they would charge men as much as women and end up penalising men. Why does everything have to be PC these days?"

Still there is evidence that in some areas that prices are evening out - for example in dry cleaning. Alan Maycock, of Jeeves of Belgravia, said yesterday: "Years ago there were circumstances when the cost of cleaning a lady's shirt was greater than a man's. But the ladies complained and most dry cleaners now charge the same."

Where women tend to get their own back is car insurance, with young women

sometimes getting quotes which are £100 less than young men. The reasons women are considered a safer bet is because men under 40 are twice as likely as women to drive without due or reasonable care and attention and twice as likely to break the speed limit.

"Young women behave rather differently than young men when they get behind a steering wheel," said David Steven of Admiral Insurance.

"Young men have much higher numbers of driving convictions and more claims per person. And when they do crash it tends to be much harder than when young women do, so the claim is more."

Miranda Seymour of Direct Line added: "The difference in the rate we charge for men and women is all based on experience. Our experience is that females in the younger age groups make less claims. By about the age of 40, the difference between the two has evened out."

There are some areas where women may still win out, like "ladies' nights" in pubs and clubs where women get subsidised drinks to attract their (civilising) custom, but even this is dying out. A spokesman for the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association said: "That sort of thing has gone out like the old rules that a woman had to be seated or that they wouldn't serve a woman wearing trousers. Certainly I'm not aware that it ever happens in pubs now."

Council plans to pay staff in shopping vouchers

A local authority is planning to pay its staff in supermarket vouchers to save money, it said yesterday. Oxfordshire County Council has put forward the scheme to help save it hundreds of thousands of pounds each year in National Insurance contributions.

It will work by offering employees the chance to be paid a percentage of their salary in vouchers for stores and supermarkets such as Sainsbury's, Safeway and Marks & Spencer, or in child-care vouchers.

Many firms pay their staff in vouchers for Christmas bonuses, but this is believed

to be the first time the idea would be used on such a large scale.

The council's chief executive, John Harwood, said: "This is a legitimate scheme whereby our employees are offered part of their remuneration in retail vouchers."

The saving is potentially very significant. For example, if 25 per cent of the Council's 15,500 staff received 10 per cent of their pay in vouchers, the saving would be £500,000 in the coming financial year.

The council would save money because National Insurance contributions do not have to be paid on the value of the vouchers.

Mr Harwood added: "We are now canvassing the level of potential interest, but there is no question of any member of staff being forced into being paid this way."

"It will simply be offered as an option, which has the benefit of saving money and helping us protect services."

Further savings would be made from the discount offered by retailers on the face value of the vouchers.

Questionnaires have been sent to staff to assess the level of interest before a decision is made. The scheme would only be available until 1 April 1999, when new legislation comes into force.

Lottery rival offered Branson bribe to drop out of bidding, QC says

Richard Branson claims the head of a firm running the National Lottery tried to bribe him. He also says he was accused of lying and now he is suing for libel. But he in turn is being counter-sued. Andrew Buncombe was in court yesterday as the unusual legal battle began.

Richard Branson spends a lot of time with a broad grin on his face, but yesterday he was frowning. His reputation as a man of honesty and integrity, the court was told, had been questioned and he was there to put things straight.

The events that led to the High Court began when Mr Branson was launching a bid to

run the National Lottery in 1993. He invited one of his rivals to lunch to ask him to provide technical services to help run the lottery as a non-profit-making venture. That man, Guy Snowden, head of the US-based GTEch, a firm making up what is now Camelot, was not interested in helping.

But George Carman QC, representing Mr Branson, said Mr Snowden was concerned about the entrepreneur's bid. At worst Mr Branson might win and at best his charitable intentions might persuade the Government to reduce the operator's profit. Mr Carman said that during the lunch at Mr Branson's London home Mr Snowden tried to bribe him to drop out. "It's as plain as a pikestaff that what Guy Snowden was about that day was floating a bribe in front of Richard Branson in order to get

him out of the bidding," Mr Branson is suing Mr Snowden, GTEch, and its spokesman, Robert Rendine, for saying he lied about the alleged bribe. Mr Snowden is suing Mr Branson for making the allegation.

The court was told that Mr Snowden said to Mr Branson: "I don't know how to phrase this, Richard. There's always a bottom line. I'll get to the point. In what way can we help you? I mean, what can I do for you personally?"

Mr Carman said: "Mr Branson said: 'What on earth do you mean?' and Mr Snowden said: 'Everybody needs something'." Mr Carman said Mr Branson replied: "Thank you very much. I'm quite successful. I only need one breakfast, one lunch, one dinner a day." Finding Mr Snowden's offer odious, Mr Branson had left the table and made a note of the conversation

in the toilet, added the QC.

The court heard details of the alleged bribe were not publicly revealed until 1995, when Mr Branson was approached by a producer from *Panorama*. He said allegations of bribery had been made against GTEch in the US and the company had been investigated by the FBI.

Mr Branson revealed the conversation from the lunch and agreed to appear on the programme.

Mr Justice Morland and the jury were played a recording of the programme.

Mr Carman said: "Nobody starts libel proceedings of this gravity with any great enthusiasm. But if you value your good name and you want to hold your head up high as an honest man, sometimes you have no alternative."

The case, expected to last four weeks, continues.

MPs lead call to strip Dame Shirley of title

Labour MPs yesterday demanded the Government ask the Queen to strip Dame Shirley Porter of her title.

Dame Shirley, the leader of Westminster City Council at the centre of the "homes-for-votes" scandal, was found guilty by the district auditor of "wilful misconduct" and "disgraceful and improper gerrymandering" between 1987 and 1989.

The High Court upheld the auditor's decision to impose a £27m surcharge on Dame Shirley and one of her former colleagues, former councillor David Weeks, while clearing three other councillors on 19 December last year.

The 25 Labour MPs, who signed a Commons Early Day Motion yesterday, condemned the Tory council's "failure ... to take any steps whatsoever to recover the £27m now owed to the people of Westminster".

It states that: "Dame Shirley Porter was made a Dame of the British Empire in

recognition of her services to local government but, in view of the court's judgement, [this House] considers that she is no longer a fit person to hold this honour."

The MPs called upon the Government "to make representations to Her Majesty the Queen to remove from Dame Shirley Porter her DBE".

Conservative former prime minister John Major was also "condemned" by the Labour motion, put down by Hendon MP Andrew Dismore.

The motion - which is unlikely to be debated in the Commons but provides a chance for MPs to raise issues they feel strongly about - fiercely criticises Mr Major's silence about the affair.

It states: "This House condemns the fact, despite assurances previously given by the former Conservative prime minister, John Major, that he would unreservedly condemn Dame Shirley Porter if she were found guilty in a court of law, no condemnation or crit-



Porter: DBE for council service

icism has yet been made by any Conservative member of this House or of Westminster City Council."

The attack comes after Dame Shirley and Mr Weeks were found guilty of "wilful misconduct resulting in a loss to Westminster City Council of £27,023,376 as a consequence of their illegal homes for votes gerrymandering policy", the motion states.

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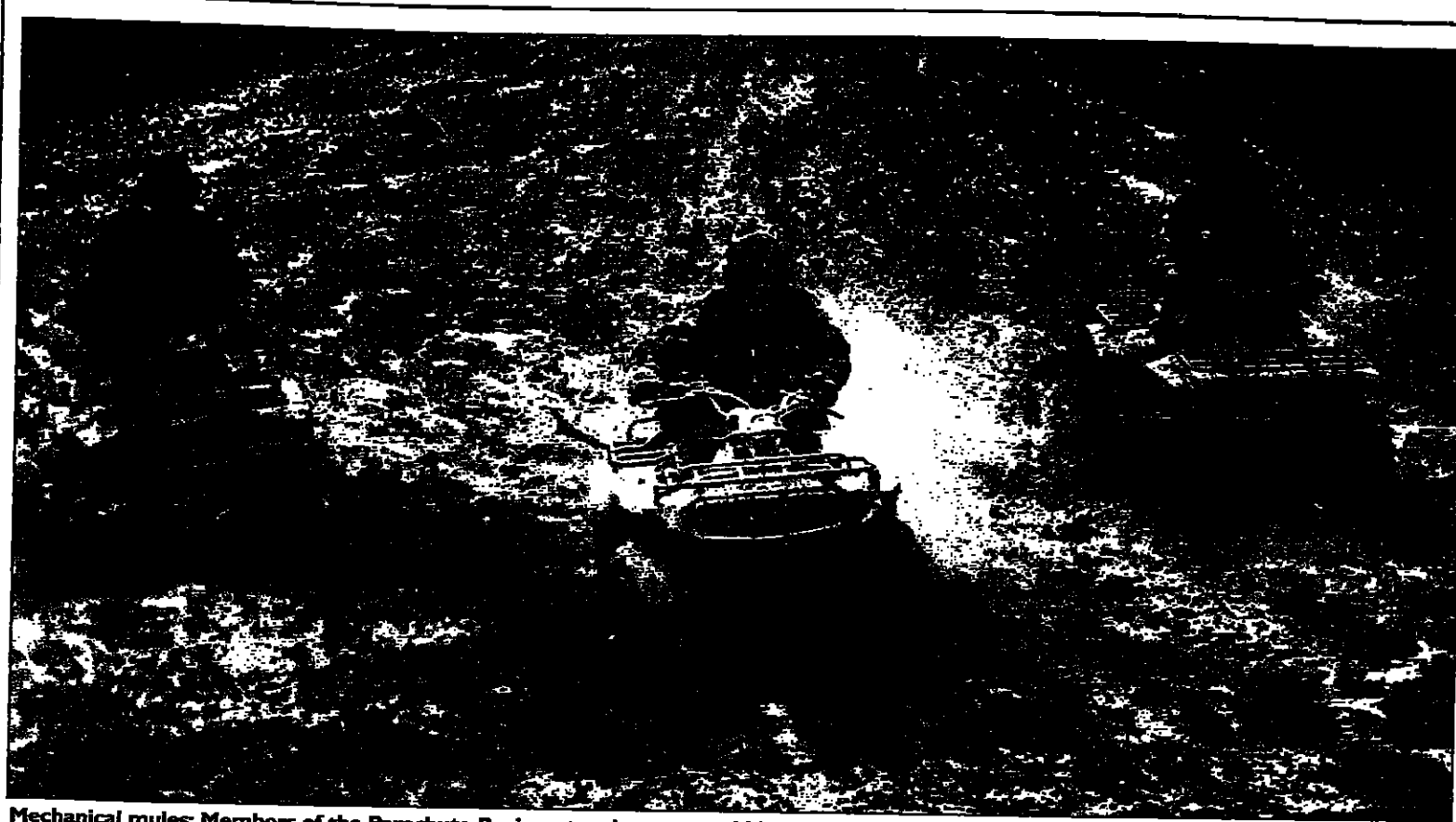
Eleven police officers who failed to find a missing teenager because of confusion over where to look are to be disciplined.

The body of Joanne Eddison, 15, who went missing in May 1996, was discovered nine weeks later on a railway embankment 100 yards from her home in Charlton, south-east London.

Liam Tovell, 16, was later jailed for seven years after admitting manslaughter. But the prosecution claimed in court that he may "have got away with murder" because the delay in finding her body meant it was impossible to determine how she died.

The British Transport Police officers were asked to search the area where the body was found. Five officers from the Metropolitan Police and five from the BTP have received formal warnings or "advice". One BTP officer faces a disciplinary charge.

— Jason Bennetto,
Crime Correspondent



Mechanical mules: Members of the Parachute Regiment trying out quad bikes in the mud on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, yesterday to test their manoeuvrability and performance in carrying heavy weapons and ammunition on the battlefield

Photograph: Tom Pilson

Parties agree agenda for Ulster talks

The Northern Ireland political talks surmounted another significant hurdle yesterday. As David McKerr, Ireland Correspondent, reports all parties involved – including Sinn Féin – agreed to use Monday's London-Dublin document as a basis for negotiation.

negotiations. Some voiced reservations about elements of the document, but many expressed eagerness to get down to business.

All this amounts to a something of a breakthrough, given that the document has found favour with the two largest Unionist and nationalist parties, the Ulster Unionists and SDLP. While they approve of the suggested elements of a settlement, however, they differ greatly on their relative importance, with nationalists playing up the north-south institution and Unionists emphasising the relationship with Scotland and Wales.

The document, which provided a suggested outline of a scheme with institutions to link not only Belfast, Dublin and London but Glasgow and Cardiff as well, has fulfilled most of the two governments' immediate hopes for it.

But Sinn Féin made it clear that accepting it as a basis for negotiation did not imply approval of its contents. The document envisages Northern Ireland remaining part of the UK though with a substantial new north-south link.

Sinn Féin's policy, it was made clear, remains an end to partition, an option which is not on anyone else's agenda. They will certainly be advancing their arguments in detail, but no one knows whether and when they might lower their sights to the type of arrangements outlined in Monday's document.

Most observers believe this is a key moment for the republican movement. One talks participant said: "This is an important, tricky time for them. There's now a piece of paper floating around out there which continues partition."

Negotiations are now scheduled to begin in earnest next Monday. At a brief plenary session yesterday all eight parties indicated their acceptance of the document as a basis for

negotiations. He said: "It is the case that there is an attempt, that this route-map is in effect an attempt to impose another partitionist settlement, then it will not work and Sinn Féin will not be part of it."

He added, however: "We are much more realistic than to expect that we were going to get a united Ireland immediately. We're on the record as saying that. We have a much more pragmatic, reasonable and legitimate proposition."

Paedophile who killed 'was not properly monitored'

A catalogue of errors was made by social workers in the supervision of a convicted sex offender who went on to kill a boy, a report concluded yesterday.

Thirty-four-year-old Steven Leisk, a paedophile, brutally strangled Scott Simpson, 9, from Aberdeen, with a scarf last July – two months before a supervision order on him was due to end. The order had been imposed following his earlier release from an 18-month sentence for sexual offences involving a teenage boy.

It was Leisk's fourth conviction for sexual offences against children, yet an independent report published yesterday into the handling of the case revealed that Aberdeen city council social workers had failed to monitor him properly. It says there was a "clear failure" on the part of a social worker, who has not been named, to comply with the requirements of National Standards. However, it adds, it is not possible to conclude that the failure resulted in, or contributed to, "the terrible conclusion to this case".

Luxor victim's body found

The missing body of Luxor massacre victim Karina Turner is in Germany, it emerged yesterday. West Yorkshire coroner Roger Whittaker said that a match for the 24-year-old woman's dental records and DNA samples had been made.

The body of the air stewardess, of Ripponden, West Yorkshire, has been missing since the massacre by Islamic militants on 18 November at the Temple of Queen Hatsheput, in Luxor, Egypt. A body mistakenly identified as Ms Turner's and now in the mortuary in Halifax is believed to be that of a German in whose grave Karina's remains lie. Her daughter, Shaunnah, five, and her mother Joan, 53, also died in the attack. The latter's body also went missing and was later found in Switzerland. The Turner family said last night that they were now planning a joint funeral service for all three.

Clark 'diaries' misleading

The presentation of a parody of Alan Clark's *Diaries* in the London *Evening Standard* newspaper gave the impression that it was written by the Conservative MP, the High Court was told yesterday. Geoffrey Hobbs QC, his counsel, said in a closing submission that the title, *Alan Clark's Secret Diary*, together with a photograph of him accompanying the column, amounted to false attribution of authorship. He said the "standfirst", in which the *Standard* said the diary was written by one of its journalists, Peter Bradshaw, did not clarify the situation.

Judgment will be given next week in the case, in which Mr Clark is seeking an injunction and damages. — Kathy Marks

RUC chief's Orange alert

The Chief Constable of the RUC does not want his men to join loyal orders in Northern Ireland. Ronnie Flanagan tells Channel 4's "Dispatches" programme tomorrow that he would prefer members not to be in the Orange Order or Apprentice Boys. "They (RUC officers) should think very carefully... whether membership of such organisations are actually compatible with people who view people's perception as to how they might perform their duty," he says. His comments came despite the RUC having its own Orange Lodge.

A Commons Select Committee and the Association of Chief Police Officers are currently looking into the issue.

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Tony Blair's government makes more use of Heathrow's VIP facilities than its Tory predecessor did, it emerged last night. The cost of suites for British and foreign dignitaries amounted to £1.6m in the seven months from May. Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, reports on suspicions that new Labour may have been too free with its privileges.

They were used 8,400 times between 1 May and 30 November this year at an average cost per visit of £191. That adds up

The facilities are hired by the Government from Heathrow, and are run for it by airport staff. They allow VIP passengers to avoid queuing for check-in desks, passport control and customs. Instead officials come to them to check their bags.

The Conservatives plan to continue to table parliamentary questions to find out

Commonwealth Office spokesman said they did often afford the facilities for two ministers to meet for a chat. The suites were "extensive" and allowed dignitaries the use of private rooms so they need not be disturbed. Junior ministers did not usually use

The Heathrow spokeswoman said most people did not spend much time in the VIP suites. But when, for example, President Clinton arrived with two Boeing 747s full of his entourage, they allowed their bags and passports to be processed efficiently.

He said Mr Paterson was making "personal accusations that I am covering up something because it is for my own polit-

A senior judge should be appointed to carry out a "short, sharp, in-depth and independent inquiry," he said.



Tony Benn warned yesterday that the left wing will be pressing for the Lords reforms to go further, to have the Upper Chamber elected in order to avoid it becoming a super quango under the patronage of the prime minister.

Tory chairmen are meeting in London on 17 January to discuss their response to the document for final agreement at a conference in the spring.

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No-go area: The Government wants more people to cycle, but is also cracking down on what some call 'Lycra louts'

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

£20 fines for 'Lycra louts' who pedal on pavement

Cyclists face £20 fines for riding on pavements as a result of a government strategy to double the number of cycle journeys by 2010.

Ministers have been quick to trumpet the need to get people to substitute short car journeys with cycling jaunts as a way of reducing congestion and pollution.

Already planned are more cycle paths as well as a nation-wide cycle network. But with the carrot comes a stick – that of fixed-penalty notices.

Endangering pedestrians by taking to the footpath on two wheels has been illegal since 1835.

Offenders face two months in jail or a £2,500 fine but cases are rarely brought to court by hard-pressed prosecutors.

News of the new deterrent came to light after a parliamentary answer from Alun Michael, a Home Office minister, which confirmed that fines for offending cyclists would be part of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1998.

The move did not please the Cyclists Touring Club, which campaigns for cycling

rights. It attacked the development as "unfair and unnecessary".

A spokesman said: "Bicycles on pavements is a symptom of generally poor facilities for cyclists. Fines will only force riders back on to dangerous roads or put them off using a bicycle, full stop."

The move was described by the *Daily Mail* as a crackdown against "Lycra louts", cyclists who plough through red lights or use the pavement to avoid busy roads.

In fact, it is a recognition by the Government of the problems they will face handling more cyclists.

In 1995 more than 350 pedestrians – the most recorded – were hurt or killed by cyclists.

Last year two people were killed and nearly 90 injured.

Other measures being considered include forcing cyclists to carry bells so that pedestrians can be warned of danger and, more controversially, coaxing bikers to wear helmets.

— Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Web quacks add to GPs' work load

Hypochondriac Internet surfers are looking up ailments and then convincing themselves they have life-threatening symptoms. Rosa Prince says doctors are wasting valuable time reassuring patients frightened by misinformation.

Rogue Internet sites are accumulating on the Web from all over the world, offering magic cures, warning of dire new diseases or giving bad advice even for simple ailments.

In other cases, patients, some with serious diseases, are given the impression they have stumbled across a miracle cure on the Internet.

David Pearce, a Leeds GP, said: "The main worry is that anybody can put information on the Internet about diseases. The false hope this can bring to patients, particularly those who are suffering from chronic illnesses and are very vulnerable, is terrible."

"There are even discussion groups where doctors will make diagnoses of people who type in their symptoms via the Internet. It's a nightmare."

On a recent *British Medical Journal* search of 41 Web pages to discover the best way to treat a child with fever, only four gave the correct diagnosis. The problem is proving particularly bad for doctors treating patients with serious illnesses.

When a person is first diagnosed, family and friends often search the Internet for information about the disease, lead-

ing them to large amounts of false advice. Peter Chambers, of the charity CancerBACUP, said: "The Internet provides an example of how a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

He said some cancer patients acting on Web information took hydrazine sulphate, which is derived from rocket fuel and is ineffective against cancer, and stopped taking their anti-nausea and pain-relieving drugs when they reacted with the hydrazine. BACUP responded by creating its own Web site to provide accurate information.

Doctors tell patients interested in the Internet to use it wisely by accessing credible organisations and help-groups. Iona Heath, who has a surgery north London, said: "There is an awful lot of garbage out there ... but it can be helpful too. The Web can sometimes be very good for people with rare diagnosis when they can learn more than I can tell them."

John Chisholm, chairman of the BMA's GPs Council, said: "People have to use a bit of discretion when using the Internet but doctors have to recognise more and more people are going to be using it. Often they can become experts and get a lot of useful information."

Some GPs are worried they do not have the time to cope with the challenges of the Web. Grant Kelly, chairman of the BMA's General Practice Computing Group, said: "You get people coming into the surgery and saying 'I want to try this drug or that treatment'. It's not a problem, as we can talk it over and usually explain why it is not appropriate, but it is all taking a long time and that's one thing GPs don't have."

Smoking damage lasts a lifetime

The harmful effects of cigarettes may last a lifetime, says a study which suggests that even smokers who give up may have done irreversible damage to their arteries.

Doctors had believed that the increased risk of heart disease and lung cancer returned to zero after about 10 years, but the new research casts doubt on this. It found the effects on arteries may be cumulative and that even passive smoking may cause permanent damage.

American researchers who studied almost 11,000 middle-aged adults found that atherosclerosis – thickening of the arteries – was 50 per cent worse in smokers than in non-smokers, as expected. However, it was also 25 per cent worse in past smokers than in people who had never smoked, suggesting a persistent effect of smoking.

The arteries were thickest in those who had smoked most for longest and their thickness was less strongly linked with whether they were current or past smokers. The scientists used ultrasound to measure by

how much the walls of the carotid artery thickened over a three-year period.

The study – conducted by researchers at Wake Forest University, North Carolina, and published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* – also found a "surprisingly large" correlation between passive smoking and atherosclerosis. In those exposed to other people's smoke for at least one hour a week thickening of the arteries was 20 per cent worse than in those who breathed clean air.

The British Heart Foundation said smokers should not use the findings as an excuse not to give up. A spokesman said: "There are physical changes that occur when you give up that makes stopping smoking a very important issue for preventing heart disease and atherosclerosis. Nobody has ever said arteries heal themselves up when you stop smoking. What this research says is that they carry on thickening, but the process does slow down."

— Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

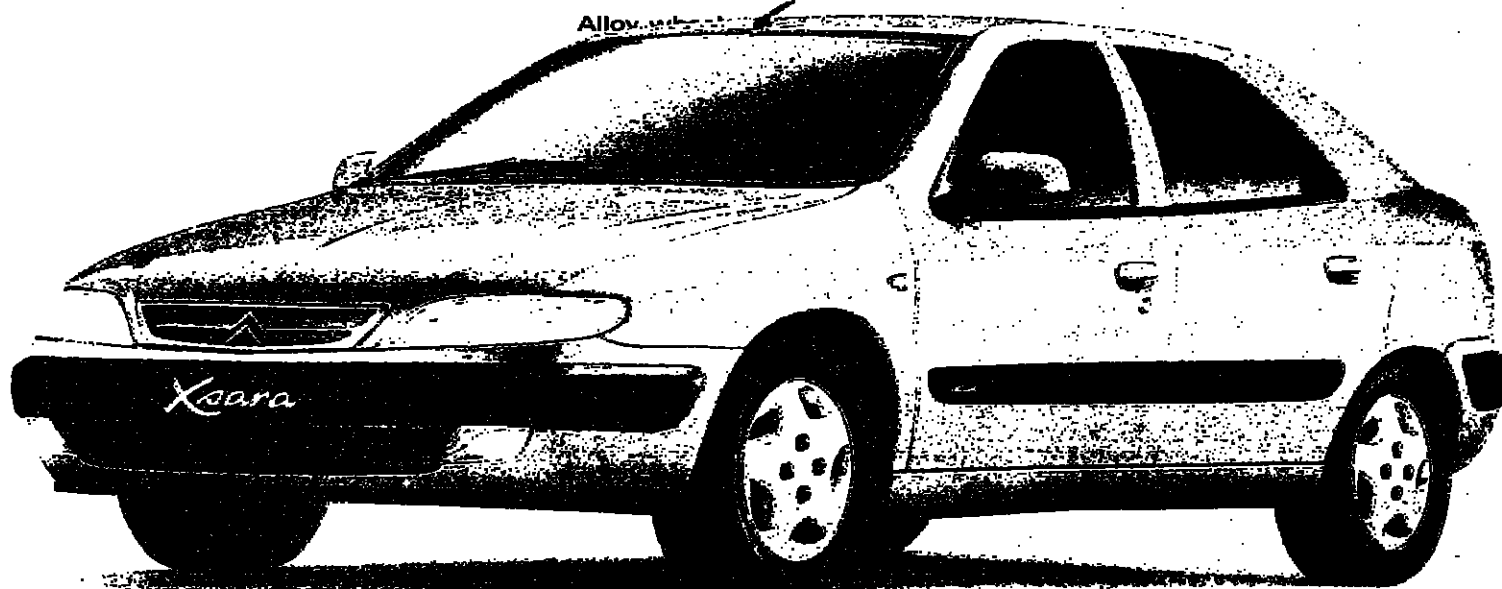
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Only a miracle saved Docklands from devastation by bombers, jury told

Two men went on trial yesterday accused of plotting the massive Docklands bombing in London which left two people dead and ended an 18-month IRA ceasefire. Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent, was in court to hear details.

It was "little short of a miracle" that an enormous lorry bomb packed with homemade explosives only killed two people - when both men were blasted through two walls - the Old Bailey heard.

The court was told details of dozens of injuries caused by flying debris, including a woman who needed 300 stitches in her face and a family of three who were sitting in a car yards from the bomb. The damage was estimated at £150m.

Ulstermen Patrick McKinley, 34, from Newry, and James McCauley, 29, from Crossmaglen, are accused of conspiring to cause an explosion likely to endanger life or cause serious injury. Both deny the charges relating to the explosion at 6.59pm at South Quay, east London, on 9 February 1996. Mr McCauley has also denied murdering two men.

John Bevan QC, for the



The scene inside the Old Bailey yesterday as the case was outlined against James McCauley (left) and Patrick McKinley (right).
Artist's impression: Enterprise News and Pictures

from the bomb after finishing a cleaning job.

Mr Berrezag, a 55-year-old Moroccan, suffered total loss of memory and had only made a marginal recovery. His son suffered facial injuries and a perforated eardrum.

Another victim, Barbara Osei, had 300 stitches to her face and suffered penetration to her right eye. Dozens of other people were hit by flying glass and debris.

Mr Bevan said: "Inaccurate and, from the point of view of timing, wholly inadequate warnings were given by telephone to a number of people. Those warnings did not begin to give the police sufficient time to warn and evacuate the many thousands of people at work and leaving work in the area."

He said there had been a "dummy run" from Northern Ireland to Carlisle in January 1996 and the following month it was driven to South Quay filled with explosives.

The case, which is due to last about five weeks, continues today.

prosecution, said that Mr McCauley was one of the bombers and that finger, thumb and palm prints were found on a number of items that link him to the explosion. But he ad-

mitted that there was no evidence to suggest Mr McKinley, a mechanic, was involved in planting the explosive device.

He accused him of helping convert a flat-bed truck in

Northern Ireland into a vehicle transporter that was later filled with tons of homemade explosive made from fertiliser and icing sugar.

Mr Bevan also outlined the

impact of the bomb, which was detonated by a two-hour delay switch fitted with Semtex.

A newsagent and his assistant, Inam Bashir and John Jeffries, who failed to leave the

area in time, died after being blown through two walls by the lorry bomb that was parked outside their shop.

The massive explosion left a crater 32ft across and 10ft

deep. Debris was found 300 yards away.

Zaoul Berrezag, his 17-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter, were injured as they waited in their car 40 yards

Girl found body of murdered mother hidden inside carpet

A Crown Court jury was told yesterday of the "ear-splitting scream" let out by a girl after finding her murdered mother rolled up inside a carpet in the loft of her luxury home.

Katie Hoskins, then 15, found the body of Glenda Hoskins after a police search had failed to locate her. Winchester Crown Court was told that she had been asphyxiated in her bath by a former lover, Victor Farrant, whom the prosecution alleges had carried out an attack on a prostitute, Ann Fidler, just two weeks earlier.

Mrs Fidler was so badly beaten that her husband "recognised her as a human being but not as his wife" after she was hit about the head and after having her face smashed through the toughened glass of an oven door. She is permanently brain-damaged and can remember nothing of the incident.

Mr Farrant, 48, a former builder, denies murdering Mrs Hoskins, a 45-year-old accountant from Port Solent, Portsmouth, in February 1996, and attempting to murder Mrs Fidler, 45, the former manageress of an escort agency in Eastleigh, Hampshire.

Jeremy Gibbons QC, for the prosecution, said DNA tests on blood and semen linked Mr Farrant to the scene of both at-

tacks. He also read details of imprints taken from sheets of paper found in Mr Farrant's flat in Portsmouth.

One, which Mr Gibbons said was intended for Mrs Hoskins to read before her death, read: "Take these instructions to be very serious. Fuck me about or refuse to do anything I ask and you will be tied up and gagged. I will not repeat myself."

"You will not get a second chance. If I have to use violence to get what I want, I will. It will make no difference to me. I am going to get what I want either way. The choice is yours."

"Be good and willing to me and you will come to no harm. I will be gentle, but remember you must show willing and be responsive."

Mr Gibbons alleged that the letters were written as Mrs Hoskins was attempting to break off a three-year relationship with Mr Farrant.

He said an examination of Mrs Hoskins' body suggested she had been pulled sharply by the ankles while in the bath. Then something was held over her mouth while she was suffocated underwater.

Her naked body, hair still "wet and bedraggled" was found by Katie when she and Tony Hoskins, the victim's estranged husband, called police

when she failed to return home from a business meeting.

"Police had already been up there but then Katie went up and there was an ear-splitting scream," said Mr Gibbons.

Earlier, the jury was told how Mrs Fidler, a prostitute who worked from home, was found barely alive by her husband, Brett, allegedly after a visit by Mr Farrant. Mr Fidler, who knew of his wife's business, returned home on 27 December 1995 to find it in darkness. He went into the kitchen and turned on the light.

"He saw a human being slumped in a pool of blood against the tumble dryer, but ... he could not tell who it was," said Mr Gibbons. Glass and blood, he said, were splattered around the kitchen. Mrs Fidler had massive head injuries and had to have part of her brain removed.

The court was told that an iron was used to beat her head so hard that it broke clear of its handle. The necks of three bottles used in the attack were found in a waste bin. All bore Mr Farrant's finger or palm prints. DNA samples from blood at the scene matched Mr Farrant's. He was arrested in France in July 1996 and returned to England in January last year. The case continues.

Royal Navy officer cleared of shaking crying baby to death

A Royal Navy officer was yesterday cleared of killing his baby daughter by shaking her to stop her crying. Louise jury reports.

A jury of eight men and four women yesterday cleared Lieutenant Paul Chalmers of the manslaughter of his five-month-old daughter Sarah after more than five hours of deliberations. Lieutenant Chalmers, 29, is now set to resume duty at Portland Naval Base in Dorset, but admitted his life had been completely changed by the 14-month ordeal since the baby died.

"The circumstances of the legal action have changed my life, but emotionally I'm still coming to terms with it. I don't feel I have been able to grieve. I don't know what the reason is, I just have not been able to show emotion," he said.

He told the Bristol court he

could not recall the few seconds in which the alleged incident took place. After the case finished he said: "I still cannot believe it now."

The Crown had alleged that Lieutenant Chalmers, of Ilchester, Somerset, had shaken his baby to stop her crying after returning home after a hard day at work. Sarah suffered a brain haemorrhage on 8 November, 1996, and died in Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, the following day after an emergency operation was unsuccessful.

Jan Pringle, for the prosecution, said Lieutenant Chalmers, who also has a two-year-old son James, lost his temper while his wife, Maureen, was visiting neighbours.

Prosecution witness Dr Hugh White, a pathologist, said the probable cause of Sarah's injuries was "non-accidental", but conceded this was a "rather controversial area in medicine at the moment".

The British au pair Louise

Woodward was accused in an American court of having shaken Matthew Eappen, a baby in her care, causing injuries which led to his death. She was convicted of second-degree murder, later reduced by the judge to manslaughter.

Under cross-examination, Dr White said that caring parents might be "unaware of the dangers of shaking a baby". But he said the risk was now being raised by agencies including the NSPCC.

Neil Sweeney, for the defence, said the injury was a "tragic accident" and that Lieutenant Chalmers had not intended any harm.

Recorder Mark Dyer accepted a majority verdict and praised the jury for its close attention to the case. "Parts of the evidence were almost unbearably poignant," he said.

As the verdict was read out, Lieutenant Chalmers and members of his family broke down in tears.

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Beckett woos the Peking money men

Labour laid out its stall in Peking yesterday to persuade Chinese companies to invest in Britain. Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, launched a multimedia show for businessmen and officials, promising a 'warm welcome'. Teresa Poole reports on attempts to win a new source of East Asian investment for Britain.

The investment trail between China and Britain has so far been a one-way street, but Ms Beckett yesterday made a pro-emphatic strike, preparing for a day when Chinese companies will follow in the footsteps of their Japanese and South Korean counterparts and seek a foothold in Europe.

"I know that it will not be long before your enterprises are ready to compete globally," she told a conference hall full of invited Chinese. "Your presence in the United Kingdom will be most highly valued and I very much look forward to welcoming into the UK in what I consider your real gateway to Europe."

So far there are about 30 small Chinese investments in the UK, ranging from the Inner Mongolia Erdos Cashmere Group to the Bank of China. But China has a total of 5,500 overseas projects worldwide, the majority in Asia and Australia, and the British government is trying to catch the eye of Peking ahead of its European rivals, even if any significant investment is still several years away.

Britain is also well aware that the economic meltdown elsewhere in East Asia will reduce projects from other countries in-

cluding South Korea and Japan. China's emergence as a country with money to spend was evident at the weekend, when 30,000 Pekingers flocked to a two-day exhibition mounted by 100 UK universities and training colleges to attract Chinese students. Such was the unexpected interest that most of the prospectuses had run out by Saturday lunchtime. One provincial cadre from central China even rang up the British embassy recently saying he was interested in sending his daughter to Gordonstoun.

The exhibition was part of the "Britain in China 1998" campaign, which will cover everything from the Royal National Theatre's performance of *Othello* in Peking to a planned visit by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, later this year. The idea is to raise Britain's profile among the Chinese, most of whom still ask visiting Brits about the fog in London.

Ms Beckett stressed that her visit was a "fresh start" to Sino-British relations, now that the Hong Kong handover was out of the way. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, arrives in Peking on Monday, when he will have to make clear what Britain's new human rights-oriented foreign policy will mean for China.

UK emphasis this week was firmly on the commercial relationship, although no new deals were signed by the British businessmen on Ms Beckett's mission. She admitted that, while Britain was by far the biggest foreign investor in China, its trade performance "could perhaps do better", given the substantial trade deficit with China.

British exports to China are far behind those of Germany, France and Italy, although they did increase 26 per cent in the first 10 months of 1997 to £738.7m. Imports of Chinese goods into the UK during the same period were £2,046m.



Western products have become increasingly trendy in China. But will Chinese investors buy into the countries that make the goods?

Photograph: AP

... but for British firms, the Eastern honeymoon is over

British investment in China has soared sevenfold in four years as companies seek low costs and new markets. But Teresa Poole visits one company that has found that the move is not without its headaches.

Chen Jingyuan thinks himself very lucky. The 32-year-old graduate engineer used to work for a Chinese state-owned printing

factory. But in 1995, Britain's leading supermarket plastic-bag manufacturer shut its factory in Telford, Shropshire, sacked the 150 employees, and shipped all the machines to south China. It was bad news for British workers, a big gamble for the company, and a great opportunity for the Chinese engineer.

Mr Chen was hired by British Polythene Industries (BPI) to work in the new joint-venture factory and sent to Telford to learn his new skills from the very people who were about to lose their jobs. "There was fresh air, and it was green everywhere and very neat," he recalled fondly.

These days, Mr Chen and 145 Chinese colleagues work on the production lines which used to sit in Telford. The Xinhui factory now churns out plastic bags at a rate of four million a day, carrying such familiar slogans as "Fresh from Sainsbury's" and "Keep Britain Tidy". Ninety per cent of the output ends up in British supermarkets, including Sainsbury's, Boots and Mace.

BPI pays well above local salaries, and has had four applicants for every job. But Mr Chen earns just £2,300 a year, compared with the £21,000 or so he would cost BPI in Britain. At a nearby machine, 23-year-old Wu Jianming takes home about £1,100 a year, twice what he earned before at a state cement factory but a fraction of a British operator's £8,000 package.

It was these sums that doomed Telford, plus the fact that the raw material costs were 10 per cent lower in Asia. By 1995, nearly three-quarters of northern Europe's supermarket bags were already being imported by BPI's rivals, mostly from Asia. Last year BPI closed another United Kingdom plastic-bag production line, cutting another 104 jobs and moving more machines to Xinhui. The company's UK plastic-bag production is now down to 10 million a day.

But raw accounts are not everything, especially in China where the best-laid business plan is at the mercy of government cadres. There are now more than 2,000 Sino-British joint ventures in China, accounting for actual investment of US\$4.482bn (£2.85bn) by the end of September 1997. But pledged investment plunged last year, by about 40 per cent. It is not only the British who are

wary; the Chinese government admits foreign investment this year will fall by up to one-third. The honeymoon is over.

When BPI set up in Xinhui, a city of 850,000 people amid the industrial sprawl of southern Guangdong province, there was culture shock on both sides. BPI is pleased with its investment, but John Bunnell, head of the retail division, is clear about the problems. "The delays caused by Chinese bureaucracy are difficult to understand at first. The pace is that of a marathon rather than a series of 100m sprints."

A change in China's national policy postponed the opening of the factory by five months. The joint venture agreement was signed in November 1993, just as China implemented a severe credit crunch to cool the economy. BPI invested £3m for a 60 per

cent stake while the Chinese partner, a Xinhui state enterprise called High Point, took 40 per cent in return for providing a newly built factory.

But Chinese bank loans suddenly dried up, and High Point could not raise funds for the building. Angela Wong, a successful Hong Kong businesswoman in her mid-forties, had introduced BPI to High Point, and was chairman of the new joint-venture company. She desperately tried to fix up funding and reassure BPI executives. "The BPI board had never been to China, and the shareholders did not understand why the project was not on time. That was the worst time I've faced in business," Ms Wong said.

In fact, for China, BPI has had a very smooth ride, thanks to Ms Wong, who identified a reliable Chinese partner and also

had strong contacts with the Xinhui government.

For the Chinese staff, most of whom came from the over-manned state sector, the biggest shock was being expected to keep busy while on shift. "At first it was a bit tiring, but gradually I got accustomed to it," Mr Chen said. Staffing levels at Xinhui are the same as they were in Telford. "We are committed to exactly the same standards of health and safety, welfare and hygiene," insisted Mr Bunnell.

For BPI the learning curve has been worthwhile and more investments are planned. But, as the figures show, foreign companies are increasingly frustrated by the struggle of doing business in China. As Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said recently: "Nobody makes money in China overnight."



Joint venture: A machine operator at BPI's Xinhui factory

Photograph: Teresa Poole

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It's what you want to know

Lift-off at last for Hong Kong airport

One of the world's largest and most expensive airports will open for business on 6 July, the Hong Kong government announced yesterday. Although Sir Donald Tsang, the financial secretary, said Hong Kong International Airport was opening on budget and on time, it is a year behind schedule.

Unlike most big infrastructure projects, Hong Kong's airport has not suffered from building delays, but political wrangling between Britain and China which marked the dying years of the colonial regime.

Problems over financing the airport reached such an impasse that the former prime minister John Major was forced to go to Peking in 1991 to try to sort them out.

He was furious to find himself in a position of being the first Western leader to visit the Chinese capital after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

His visit barely moved the logjam. In the end, Peking got

its way, forcing the Hong Kong government to finance the HK\$155bn (£12.4bn) project largely out of its coffers rather than by long-term loans which would be repayable after China assumed control of the former colony.

The airport will eventually have capacity to handle 87 million passengers and 9 million tonnes of cargo a year. This is more than double the present passenger traffic at the existing airport and will increase cargo throughput sixfold.

The government had been thinking of opening the airport in April, when the terminal and runway facilities will be complete. However, a railway linking the new airport to the centre of town will not be finished until the end of June.

At a meeting of the cabinet yesterday members bowed to pressure to think again about trying to open the airport without the railway.

— Steve Crawshaw

Cook feels pinch over human rights

Britain found yesterday that it had fallen uncomfortably between two stools, with its partly robust, partly cautious policy on China.

China attacked Britain in connection with a visit by leading dissident Wei Jingsheng, who met Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett on Monday. Foreign ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said that China had already made diplomatic representations: "No foreign government should make use of Wei Jingsheng to interfere in China's internal affairs."

But Britain has gained few brownie points from human rights activists for arranging the meeting with Mr Fatchett, which was a form of consolation prize. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, had said he was too busy to meet Mr Wei until after his return from Peking, in an apparent attempt not to offend China. Mr Wei expressed his unhappiness that "because of business, they want to keep a

distance from me. I think it's a pity." A Foreign Office spokesman yesterday expressed "disappointment" at the Chinese complaint, but said that it was "nothing out of the ordinary".

Perhaps more than anywhere else except Saudi Arabia, China is where Mr Cook's ethical foreign policy finds itself between a rock and a hard place. China's disregard for human rights is well known. But it is also one of Britain's most important trade partners. Britain is the leading European investor in China. Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, has just started a 10-day tour of China which includes a sales pitch to Chinese investors for Britain as the "gateway to Europe".

Mr Cook flies to Peking for meetings on Monday and Tuesday with the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, and with foreign minister Qian Qichen. From Peking, he flies to Hong Kong.

— Steve Crawshaw

Sac

Iraq surprised Jordan last month four Jordanian small-scale arms inspectors has President Saddam hanged them Jordan was pleased Iraqi general to details of the two former allies

With Downing street's new focus on the Middle East, the British government is expected to take a more active role in the region. The British government is expected to take a more active role in the region. The British government is expected to take a more active role in the region.

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Barclay brothers to launch French weekly

The weekly newspaper *The European* will give birth to a French daughter, *L'Europeen*, this spring.

The new magazine, also a weekly, will be the first attempt to sell a Europe-oriented publication to French readers. If successful, *L'Europeen* could be the forerunner of German, Spanish and Italian-language clones of the same idea.

Its parents are, politically speaking, an odd couple: 65 per cent will be owned by the right-wing, anti-European Union

British financiers, the Barclay Brothers, who own *The European*; 35 per cent will be owned by the left-of-centre, stoutly pro-European French newspaper, *Le Monde*. The editor will be a celebrated French television journalist, Christine Ockrent, Belgian-born and also known for her strongly pro-EU views. Although the two publications will share some resources, Ms Ockrent was at pains to point out yesterday that they would have separate editorial policies.

The British version of *The European*, launched by Robert Maxwell in May 1985, has always taken a fiercely Eurosceptical approach. So has the Edinburgh-based morning newspaper, *The Scotsman*, since its purchase by the Barclay Brothers and the installation of the former *Sunday Times* editor, Andrew Neill, as the editorial

supremo of the group. Ms Ockrent said that her own newspaper would take a different view but would not slavishly support the institutional European line. Unlike its British

sister, the dummy version of the new French paper partially takes the form of a review, with extensive translation, of articles which have already appeared in other European publications.

The magazine will have a minimal staff of 30, plus freelancers. It has set a break-even circulation target of 80,000, which seems modest enough but may be larger than the real circulation of its chronically unsuccessful British progenitor.

The launch of a French version of *The European* is the ad-

mission of the failure of the project as originally conceived by Mr Maxwell. He wanted to create a newspaper - ultimately a daily - that would be bought by all nationalities in Europe. Conversely, however, it always peered at Europe through distinctly British spectacles.

The creation of *L'Europeen* is a switch of policy towards the creation of a stable of newspapers which will examine European themes and issues, but will remain anchored in national markets and written in the ma-

joir European languages. In a sense, this sits more easily with the nationalistic, anti-federalist view of Europe propagated by Barclay brothers' publications. ● Andrew Neil, editor in chief of *The European* and *The Scotsman*, has appointed his friend, and former Tory MP Gerry Malone as associate editor of *The European*. Mr Malone recently failed to win the seat of Winchester after succeeding in getting the general election result overturned in the courts. — John Lichfield, Paris

EU team ready to leave for Algeria

The European Union last night was finalising plans for an immediate mission to Algeria to discuss the slaughter in the country, amid reports that as many as 400 people may have died in the latest massacres close to the capital, Algiers, at the weekend.

After chairing a meeting of senior officials from the 15 EU states, Jeremy Greenstock, political director of the Foreign Office, said the delegation would "see what help" Europe could offer. It would follow the "troika" formula, with representatives from Luxembourg, Britain and Austria, respectively the past, present and next holders of the EU presidency. The team was "ready to go tomorrow," once it had permission from the Algerian authorities. The aim is to deliver a report to foreign ministers when they meet in Brussels on 26 January.

But though it looks certain to go ahead, the visit will be extremely delicate. "Fact-finding" is its real purpose - but no one can say as much as not

to infuriate the Algerian regime, for whom the very use of the term casts doubt on its insistence that the endless killing is anything less than 100 per cent the work of Islamic fundamentalist rebels.

In public at least, Algeria maintains the greatest service the EU could render would be to clamp down on the exile groups in Europe. These, it says, provide the financial and logistical support that enables the rebels to continue a conflict which has taken an estimated 75,000 or more lives since 1992.

In the latest carnage, at the village of Sidi Hamed south of Algiers, the government claims 103 people were murdered and 70 wounded.

Reports in the normally tightly controlled local press suggest the death-toll was more than 400. This would make it the bloodiest single massacre of the war, bringing to 1,700 the total of victims since the Islamic holy month of Ramadan began on 30 December.

— Rupert Cornwell

Police admit Mexico massacre role

It took a Mexican police chief to confirm what everybody knew. Police turned a blind eye in the state of Chiapas last month while gunmen supporting President Ernesto Zedillo's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) massacred 45 Indian peasants.

In a new blow to Mr Zedillo and the party, Chiapas police commander Felipe Vazquez was charged with helping arm the gunmen with automatic rifles for the attack on sympathisers of the anti-government Zapatista guerrilla group, most of them women and children. He said he had been following orders from unnamed superiors. Mr Zedillo also came under heavy criticism yesterday after Chiapas state police opened fire on townspeople protesting against the pre-Christmas massacre. A woman was killed in the incident in the town of Ocosingo.

Mr Zedillo has already dismissed his Interior Minister and the governor of Chiapas, both from the PRI, over the pre-Christmas massacre and their failure to bring peace to the poverty-stricken state.

A report by Mexico's Human Rights Commission said police must have easily heard nine hours of shooting from the hamlet of Acteal on 22 December but turned a blind eye. Police officers helped them hide their weapons, the report said.

— Phil Davison, Latin America Correspondent

Hostage at Tokyo Stock Exchange

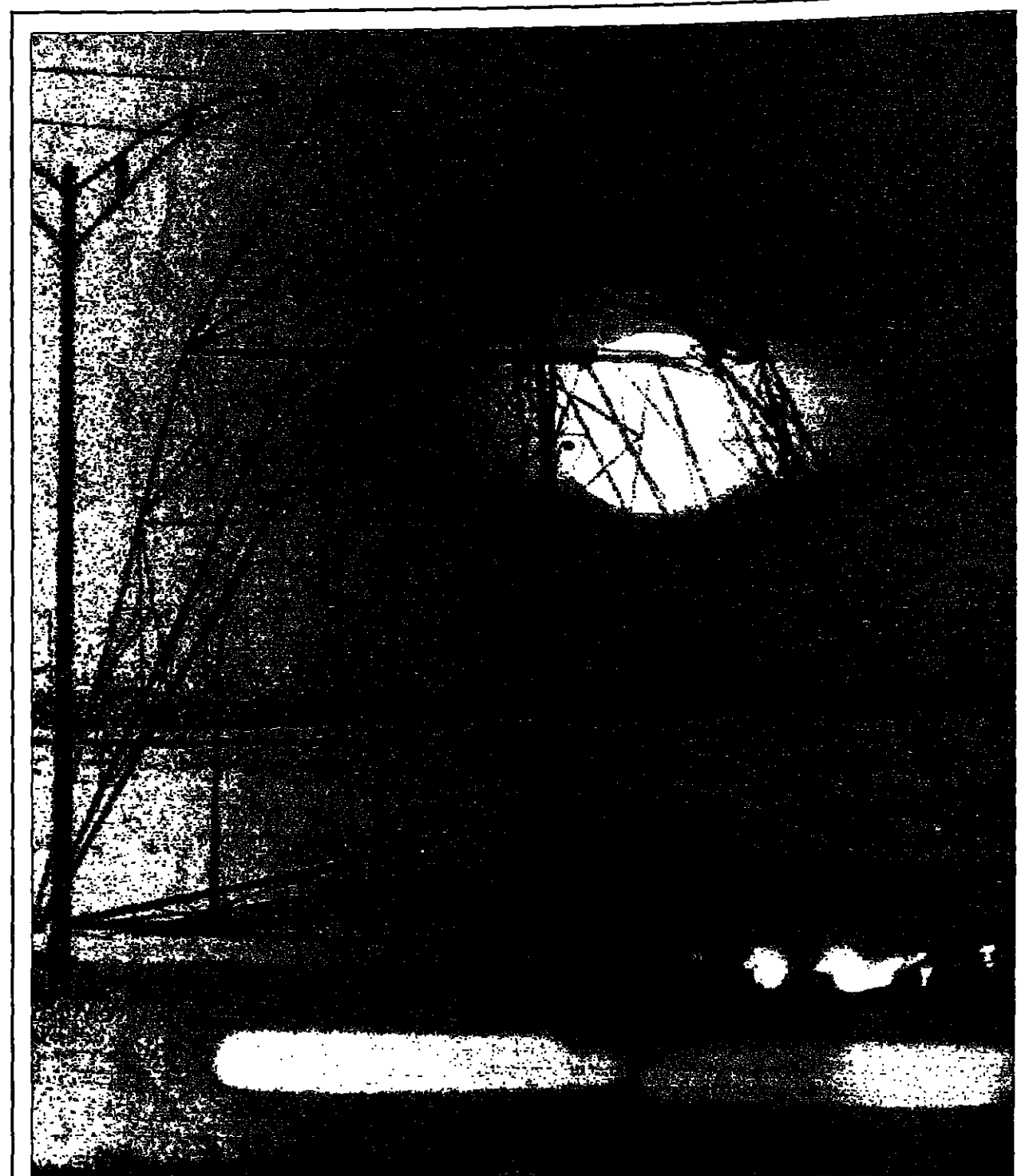
The economic ructions in Asia produced their most violent incident yet when an armed man took a hostage in the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) because he was upset with the government's management of the economy and the penetration into Japan of foreign companies.

Tetsuo Itagaki, a former member of an extreme right-wing organisation, gave himself up to police yesterday evening after a five-hour stand off on the executive floor of the stock exchange building in central Tokyo. At 1pm, according to police sources quoted by Japanese television, he had entered the office of Masahiro Abe, an official of the Finance Ministry, who oversees the running of the exchange, and taken him hostage with a firearm.

He asked to see the finance minister, Hiroshi Mitsuoka, demanded that stock trading be suspended, and expressed anger at the government's handling of the economy which is perilously close to recession, dragged down by the currency crisis in south-east Asia and Korea.

All afternoon, the streets around the TSE were sealed off and 400 riot police swarmed around the high-rise building's entrances. Hundreds of cameramen and reporters congregated and television helicopters buzzed in the sky but trading on the lower floors went on, and the exchange actually closed up 91.50 points.

— Richard Lloyd Parry, Tokyo



Light on the matter: A full moon rising behind a crumpled hydro-tower, south-east of Montreal, damaged by the weight of last week's ice storms; the severe weather caused a power crisis in eastern Canada. Photograph: CP Photo

Comfort for Jospin as crowds fail to turn up at Paris unemployed protest

A few thousand people marched through Paris yesterday to demand better benefits for the unemployed. There were equally poor turn-outs in other French cities, a setback for a movement which has shaken the French government in recent weeks. John Lichfield joined the marchers.

They had captured the sympathy of the French public and the attention of the media. They had provoked nasty cracks in the French centre-left government.

The leaders of the month-old protest movement of the unemployed had to prove yesterday that they had, for the first

time, stirred the massed ranks of the French jobless themselves.

On the whole they failed. Another attempt will be made on Saturday but the momentum may have been lost by then. In Paris, the police counted 4,500 demonstrators and this, for once, seemed a generous figure. The Communist trade-union federation, the CGT, counted 10,000 but this was pure propaganda.

There were some genuinely unemployed people in the Paris march, which passed, ironically, through some of the wealthiest parts of the capital. But the general impression was of a 1968 veterans' association reunion, a gathering of the standard tribes of the French activist left: the hard-line Communists, the anarchists, the gays, and the

greens. Demonstrations called in other French cities were equally unconvincing: only 200 in St Etienne, a centre of high unemployment; only 500 in Toulouse.

There was a bigger crowd of 6,000 in Marseilles but, given the 3,000,000 unemployed people in France, the figures were not impressive.

The protesters were calling, amongst other things, for an immediate increase in the minimum social payments of around £200 a month made to the young or long-term unemployed.

Last week the Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, set up a £100m fund for people in acute difficulties but then sent the police to break up a score of sit-ins in dole offices around the country.

Yesterday's demonstrations were meant to take the protests on to a new phase.

Richard Dethyre, leader of one of the three main unemployed pressure groups involved, put on a brave face.

"We are seeing the start of something important, the unemployed standing up, for the first time, to insist that their dignity must be respected too."

But others were clearly disappointed by the turn-out. An unemployed waiter, Hamo Kaci, 35, living on £55 a week in minimum social benefits, said: "The problem is it's difficult to motivate the unemployed to come to a march like this. Either they'd rather use the time to look for a job or they've already sunk - and I know the feeling myself - into a kind of isolation and depression."

Assassin to explain alleged links with Winnie Mandela

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela may have thought her grilling by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was over. But as Mary Broid reports any sense of relief was premature.

A month ago, Mrs Mandela denied taking part in a string of murders, tortures and assaults carried out by her notorious bodyguards the Mandela United Football Club in the late 1980s.

But the evidence presented

at the sensational nine-day public hearing is thought to have contributed to Mrs Mandela's failure to become ANC deputy president in subsequent party elections.

Now the TRC, set up to expose the atrocities of the apartheid years, has called 18 former members of the apartheid-era security forces - including Eugene de Kock, the most notorious state assassin, now serving 212 years at a maximum-security prison - to explain publicly their links with Mrs Mandela.

The latest hearings are expected to take place at the end of the month. Officially the commission says it wants to in-

vestigate the extent of police harassment and surveillance of Mrs Mandela but police witnesses may shed light on counter allegations made at the original TRC hearings: that Mrs Mandela was not, in fact, a security police victim but a police spy.

Mrs Mandela is under no obligation to attend the new hearing but she is invited and her lawyers will be permitted to cross-examine witnesses.

Along with de Kock, whose murderous activities earned him the nickname Prime Evil, the witness list includes a judge, crime squad officers and two secret agents, who will give their evidence in camera.

Some of the security force members were named by witnesses in the original hearings. The TRC is reported to be seeking further information about the death of Themba Mabote, an associate of Mrs Mandela and, according to one witness last month, also her former lover. Mr Mabote, who it is also claimed was a police spy, was killed by the security forces. De Kock, former commander of the secret police unit, Vlakplaas, is expected to be questioned about Mr Mabote's death.

Other officers will be quizzed about the murder of Dr Abu-Baker Asvat and the disappearance of Lolo Sono, a Soweto youth. Mrs Mandela has

been accused of ordering the death of both.

At last month's hearings, two former secret policemen told the commission that British and US agents secretly helped the apartheid regime spread rumours that Mrs Mandela was a child killer, an alcoholic and drug user.

However, in a blistering attack on Mrs Mandela, another witness, Azhar Cachalia - a leading light in the battle against apartheid - said that in the late 1980s many suspected Mrs Mandela was a police informer.

Mr Cachalia was part of the leadership of the United Democratic Front which publicly

distanced itself from Mrs Mandela in 1989. He said everyone seemed aware that there were guerrillas and arms in Mrs Mandela's home and yet the police never raided it.

Others have speculated that the police were simply giving Mrs Mandela enough rope to hang herself and thus discredit her jailed husband.

Some of the football club members were certainly working for the police. Last month, police commissioner George Fivaz said that Jerry Richardson, former coach of the soccer club - now serving life for the murder of teenage activist Stompie Seipei Moeketsi - was a police spy.

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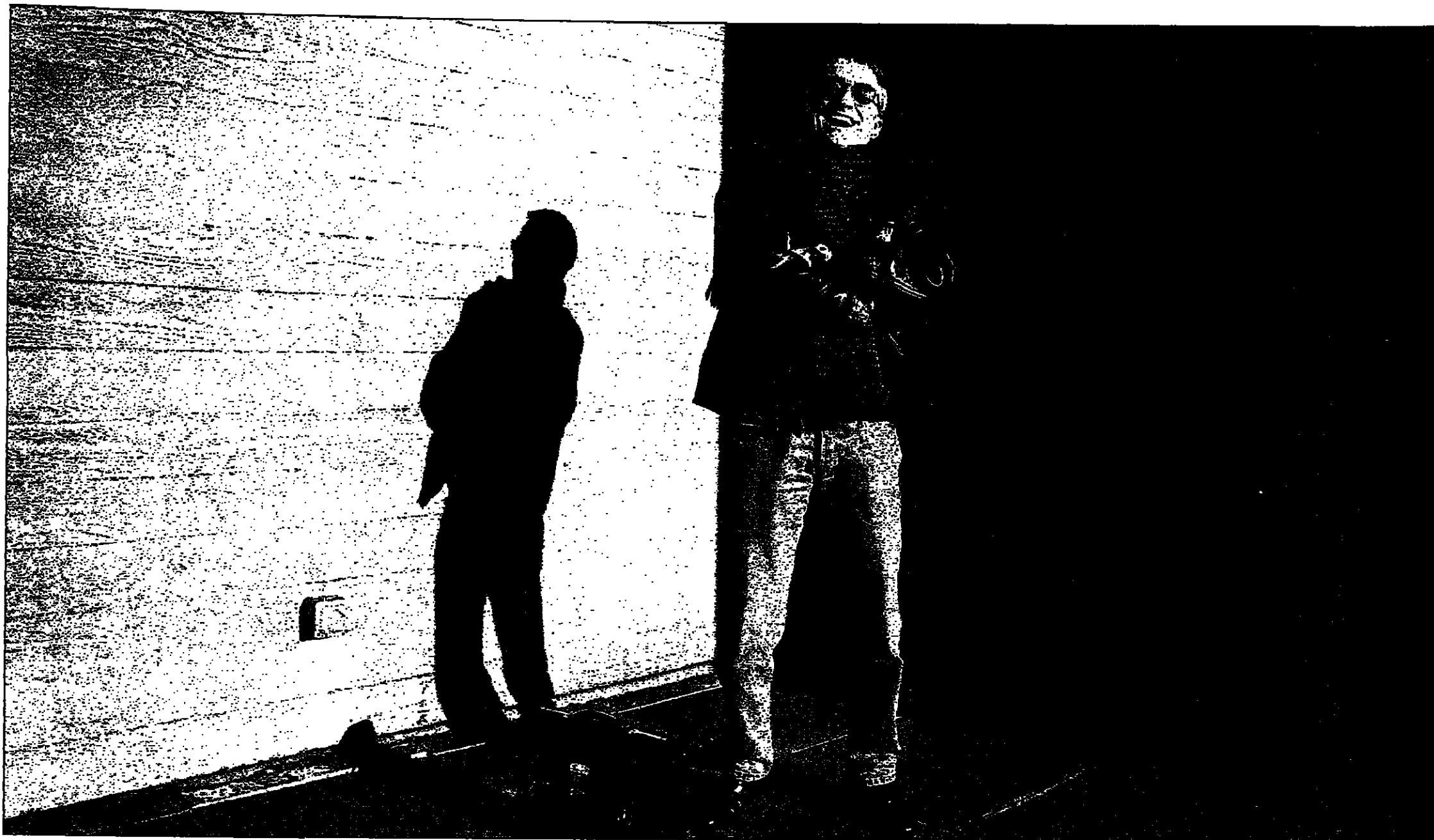
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The day he stood still? That'll be the day. Kevin Elyot limbers up for the National Theatre premiere of his latest (but not his second) play

Photograph: kalpesh Lathigra

National debut? Time to put the record, er, straight

Call him gay, call him a writer, but whatever you do, never call Kevin Elyot a gay playwright. Oh, and while you're at it, don't call 'My Night With Reg' his first play either.

In addition to bagging both the Olivier and the Evening Standard awards for Best Comedy, Kevin Elyot's *My Night With Reg* won him the 1994 Critics' Circle Award for Most Promising Newcomer. With his new play *The Day I Stood Still* beginning previews tomorrow at the National Theatre, Elyot is hardly about to start carping, but it must have rankled. "Most Promising Newcomer"? Twelve years earlier, he had waltzed off with the Samuel Beckett Award for his debut play, *Coming Clean*, at the Bush theatre. In 1990, his TV drama *Killing Time* had nabbed the Writers' Guild Award. And, in 1992, he had adapted Ostrovsky's *Artists and Admirers* for Phyllida Lloyd at the RSC.

None of these successes spelt an end to his day (and night) job, however. Since leaving Bristol University drama department in 1973, Elyot has maintained a steady career as an actor, tackling everything from West End roles to Edward Bond's *Stone*, one of the earliest plays commissioned by the now-defunct Gay Sweatshop. Indeed, calmly nibbling a cake in the National Theatre café, he points out that, while he hasn't acted for five years, he still hasn't entirely given up on it. "If something came along, I might consider it," he opines, mock-loyally. "A nice cameo on camera."

Mind you, the thought of a stage role makes him shudder. Quite apart from the strain of rehearsals and eight shows a

week, having now sat in the saddle, he's not anxious to relinquish the reins.

"As a writer, in the theatre at least, you get treated better. I do think that being an actor can be slightly degrading. You have to be rather craven. I hate all that. As a writer, you have more control, you're in charge of the goods."

Elyot has been hedging his bets since his days at King Edward's School in Birmingham. He studied piano to grade 8, was a choirboy for years and, thanks to an enlightened teacher, was very involved in drama and wrote all manner of things. But acting was his major interest.

"My Desdemona..." he breathes. "You could've heard a pin drop when I sang the 'Willow Song'. Actually, even then I had very dark eyebrows and I wore a long, blonde wig. I looked hideous."

To this day he is amazed that, at a school where academic accomplishment or sporting prowess were the criteria of excellence, his dramatic endeavours alone elevated him to the status of prefect.

It was not a role he relished. Guarded and softly spoken, he has never regarded himself as a clubbable type, although

merely being a sixth-former granted him entrée to something called the Cartland Club ("as in Barbara," he quips), a room all set about with leather armchairs, which he barely visited. The prefects, too, had their own room but he never went in. It set a pattern for the rest of his life. As a writer, he sees himself as out on a limb.

"I'm very happy about it. I'm not even part of any particular generation. I'm 46 and obviously not one of the up-and-coming young Turks. I'm certainly not like Stoppard and his generation, who have been megastars for decades, so I really feel outside all that and very liberated by it. I can plough my own furrow."

When *Reg* arrived in the West End, one or two commentators pigeon-holed it as part of the wave of gay plays. Elyot is uncomfortable with that too, which might lead one to accuse him of clinging to Groucho Marx's line. "I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member." But he is not alone. Most gay writers dislike being marginalised. "Of course I am a writer and I am gay, but that kind of characterisation is a way of belittling the writing. You're kind of brushed aside, so that

the discussion can then move on to 'serious' writing. But recently I found I'm not being called a gay writer and I quite like that, not because I have any problem with being gay, but be-

faintly ludicrous about it," he muses drolly. "That men have a penis that they might not have any control over..."

Unexpectedly, the loudest criticism came from tetchier sec-

BY DAVID BENEDICT

cause I just want to be judged along with everyone else."

If people were to categorise "straight writers" in similarly exclusive terms, it might be different. But, either way, Elyot sees it as a dead end.

"I think I've got almost nothing in common with other gay writers other than orientation. Jonathan Harvey, for example, is of a different generation and pursues his own ideas - no better, no worse, just different."

A play about secrets and lies, *Reg* wrought considerable laughter and pain from Elyot's trademark tragi-comic writing about love and particularly sex. "Sex is great, but I suppose I always think there's something

tions of the gay press, who harangued him for penning a supposed "Aids play" that demoted the disease to the back-ground. "It's not about Aids," he tried to explain. Beneath the spectre of the notorious Clause 28, he wrote *Consent* for Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke. It was a notably dangerous exercise, given that the 16-year-old actors were technically underage, but he was unhappy writing an issue play in workshop. The result was certainly far removed from *Reg*, an elegant comedy of manners and mortality whose title alludes to Eric Rohmer's cinematic conversation piece, *Ma Nuit chez Maude*. *The Day I Stood Still* is an

equally finely crafted chamber piece, held together by a structure playing games with time. Past and present are held up for inspection as Horace, the central character, faces up to a hidden passion. Not a million miles away from the central dilemma of *Reg*, it's a subject that fascinates Elyot. "You could make the mistake of thinking my stuff is autobiographical. It is a bit, but not totally. I've never written about the first person I fell in love with. In fact, I had lunch with him a couple of months ago. He's happily married with children, a terribly nice man. Do you know, when we met up, he'd just been to make a donation to a sperm bank."

Nevertheless, Elyot constantly returns to the lasting quality of early experiences. "There are lots of things I thought when I was a teenager and, at the time, I remember thinking, 'When I'm older, they'll change.' Thirty years on, you realise you're on exactly the same track. Of course your opinions change, but the gut thing lasts, the pattern is set. In *The Day I Stood Still*, tiny trivial events later assume massive importance. That's part of the same thing."

Although his writing has advanced pretty smoothly, there have been disappointments. He was very unhappy with the finished version of his BBC adaptation of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, the victim of endless budget cuts which continued right through production; his relationship with the producers and director fell apart. "I had cut scenes fairly fast but they ended up being given an unnecessary beginning and end. A rather paranoid, strange book became a lumbering period piece," he remarks, evenly.

An even greater disappointment was the shelving of his adaptation of Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming Pool Library*. "Regardless of the quality of my adaptation, the project was hot to trot. It was 1994, Alan was up for the Booker with *The Folding Star*, *Reg* was beginning to happen and it was such an audacious, celebrated book."

He believes it was a failure of nerve on the part of the BBC. "Naively, I'm still quite optimistic that, somewhere, sometime, it might still happen." Meanwhile, he's busy adapting Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* for film and about to nip off to Australia for yet another production of *Reg* (already seen as far afield as Japan, Mexico and Slovenia).

Not that he'll be interfering. "You can't nanny it along, you have to let them discover it for themselves." That's the actor talking. The distinguishing mark of his plays is his rare confidence in leaving things unsaid, allowing the actors to finish the

thoughts. Not only is that more satisfying to act, it releases an audience's imagination, pulls them closer to the play's heart. No prizes, then, for guessing that he venerates Chekhov. He even went as far as writing a deeply private homage to *Three Sisters*, beguilingly entitled *Point Your Troika*.

"It was a one-off performance and I was the only person allowed to watch it," he hastens to add. "The late Peter Whitman was Olga, whose character was visited by the ghosts of Bette Davies and Carol Channing. There was going to be a follow-up called *The House of Bernarda Duckworth*, but somehow I never got round to that... but I might," he threatens. "Though you've got to be in it to see it."

The Day I Stood Still previews at the Cottesloe, RNT, South Bank, London SE1, from tomorrow, and opens on 22 Jan. Booking: 0171-928 2252



Sofa so good: Richard Linton and Kenneth MacDonald in 'Reg', left; the cast of 'Day', right



Sasha Gusov

A merry dance, full of incident but little action

FIRST NIGHT

Like a Dancer
New End Theatre, London

As the house lights dim, the wistful opening strain of Vaughan Williams's *In the Fen Country* steals across the auditorium, tuning us in to the play's location. Throughout *Like a Dancer*, playwright Barbara Hartridge uses hymns, popular songs and piano tunes to punctuate her 1940s East Anglian tale, but this is no musical. Nor is it some peaceful, rural idyll.

Martha is eking out an existence in a tithe cottage with her rough

farm-labourer husband Bob, a teenage son and daughter and "the little 'uns". She's desperate to keep their heads above the poverty line but one morning she unpacks a suitcase filled with hand-me-down clothes and discovers a flapper-style Twenties dress. More music floats in as she clasps it to her body and dreams of her dancing days long gone, worlds away from the drab domesticity that surrounds her. Yet, as she snaps guiltily out of her reverie, we realise that her past not only betokens pleasure, but also secret pain.

Despite all this, the family seem to be muddling along happily until the day when Bob throws his job away in a fit of pride, thus forcing

them to up sticks. The first 20 minutes or so are oddly engrossing as Hartridge tenderly paints in the details of her picture of harsh domestic life but, unfortunately, she and her director John Adams cannot handle her own plot.

Over-ripe melodrama swoops in as figures from the past haunt the stage, threatening to expose Martha's dark secret. We learn of a child, born out of wedlock, who has been brought up by an aunt, but the thriller-like structure over-balances everything. Crowded with incident, it's full of activity but lacks dramatic action. The arc of the play segues with unnecessary scenes and the plot revelations are clumsy. Even when the cat is let out of the bag, nothing

is resolved, which leaves us with a continuing soap opera. Hence, despite an attempt at a climactic finish, the play stops abruptly rather than ends.

The unforced acting in the principal roles, however, is excellent. Mark Wing-Davey brings weight and a threatening presence to the maritulate husband and Adams coaxes excellent, truthful performances from Scott Hickman and Philippa Stanton as the children who, tossed between the demands of a violent father and guilt-ridden mother, grow up fast from carefree youth to fearful adolescence. In the pivotal role of Martha, Amelda Brown bravely refuses to sentimentalise her character and steers a sure and effective

course, all the more impressive considering the play's lurching tone.

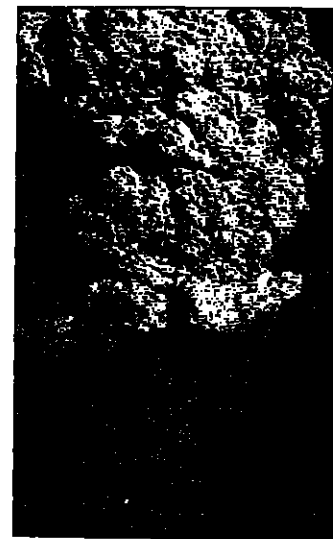
In the premiere of Caryl Churchill's *Fen*, Brown once gave a memorable performance as another struggling mother, but it's not just that coincidence which lends this production a sense of *déjà vu*. It's as if the atmosphere of *Fen* has been crossed with the hidden-child plot of Churchill's *Top Girls*. Sadly, *Like a Dancer* lacks the skill and dramatic imagination of either. Sincerity, effective dialogue and good acting are not enough to keep a play afloat. To 1 February, New End Theatre, Hampstead, London NW3. Booking: 0171-794 0022

David Benedict

THE INDEPENDENT

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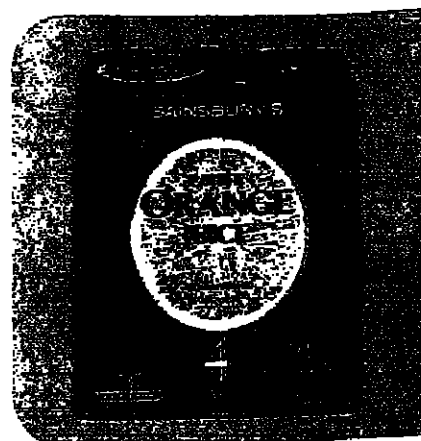
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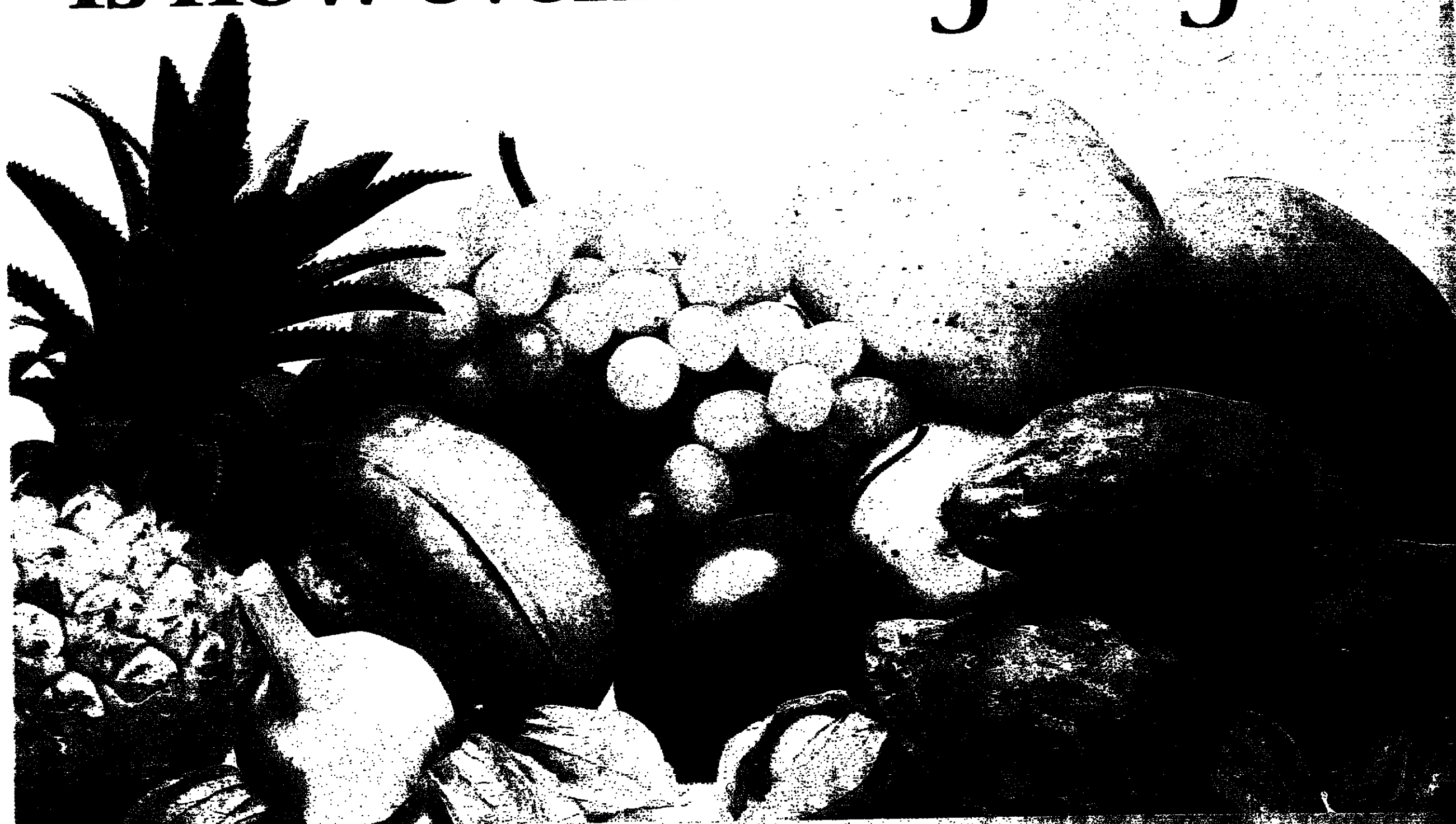
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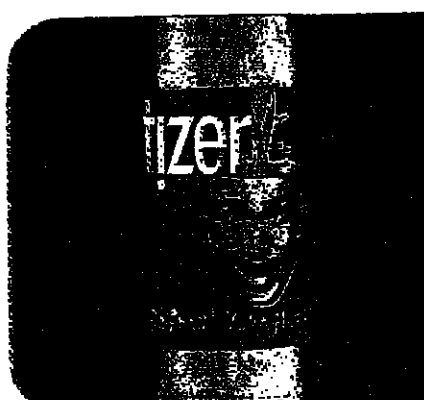
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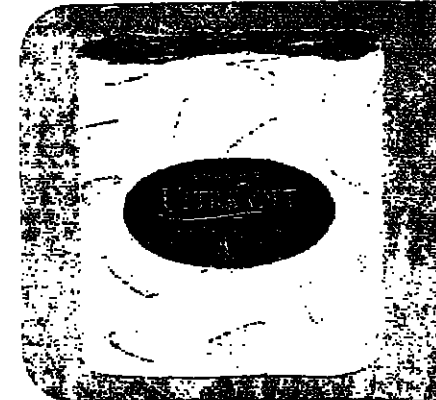
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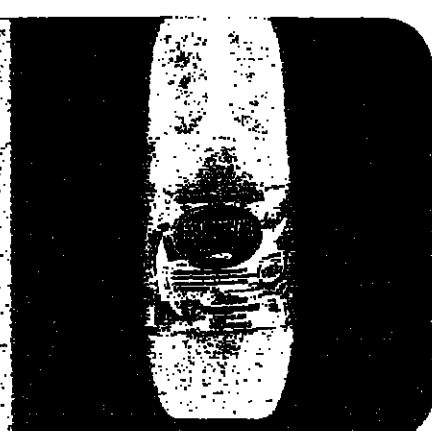


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15/FASHION

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 1998
15

Alien resurrection – the flares that never died



Oh my gawd – it's the Seventies. They've remembered the decade that fashion forgot, writes Tamsin Blanchard. Photographs by James Cant.

If, seen from here, the Seventies were your worst sartorial nightmare, then prepare to confront it all over again. This week, *Boogie Nights*, the epic movie about the porn industry of Seventies West Coast America, starring Mark Wahlberg as Dirk Diggler in brown Crimplene flares, opens at a cinema near you.

And that's not all. In early February, Sigourney Weaver takes to the big screen in *The Ice Storm*, a more cerebral story set on America's East Coast in the earlier half of the decade, 1973 to be precise. Before you know it, you'll be singing "Boogie Nights" and getting on down to your local Oxfam store in search of clothing horrors – halter necks, boob tubes and gold Lurex galore; or, even worse, you'll be dragging out those relics of your youth that you couldn't quite bare to part with. Horrors of the haunted wardrobe!

"They keep saying the Seventies are coming back," says Sigourney, whose movie clothes are more *Abigail's Party* than disco fever. "They are not coming back. They could not come back. They would not be allowed in." This a woman who knows the meaning of horror and fear. Clearly, *Alien Resurrection* was a picnic by comparison.

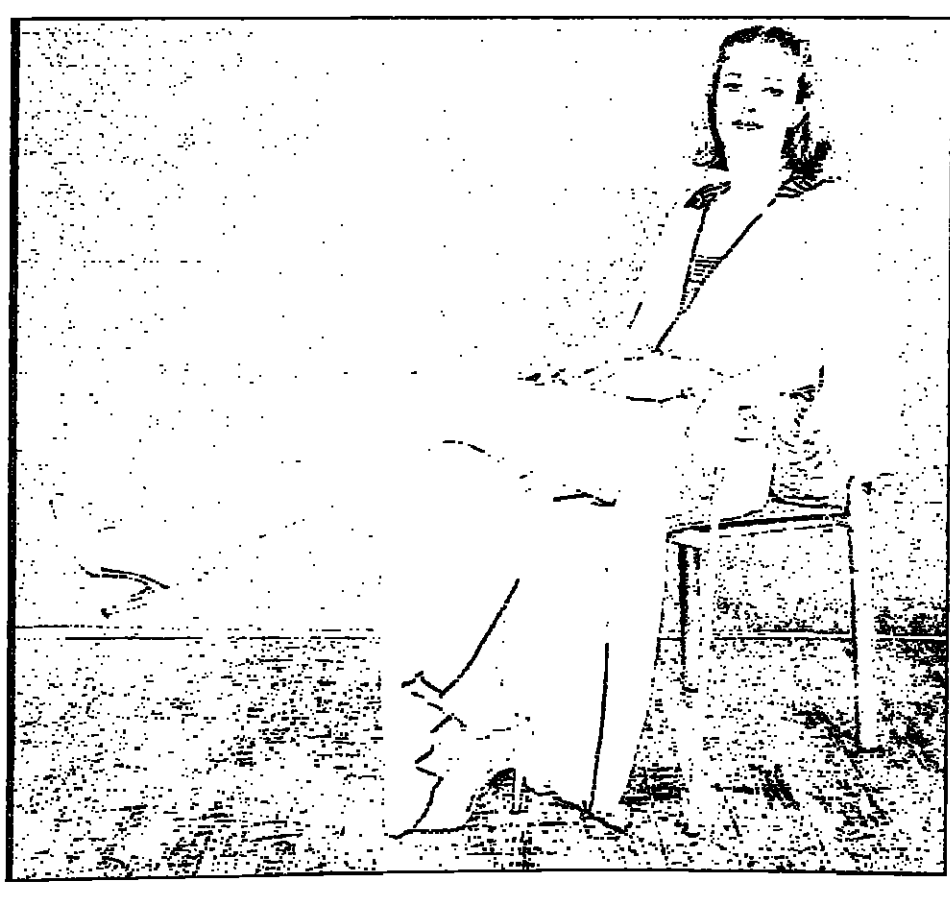
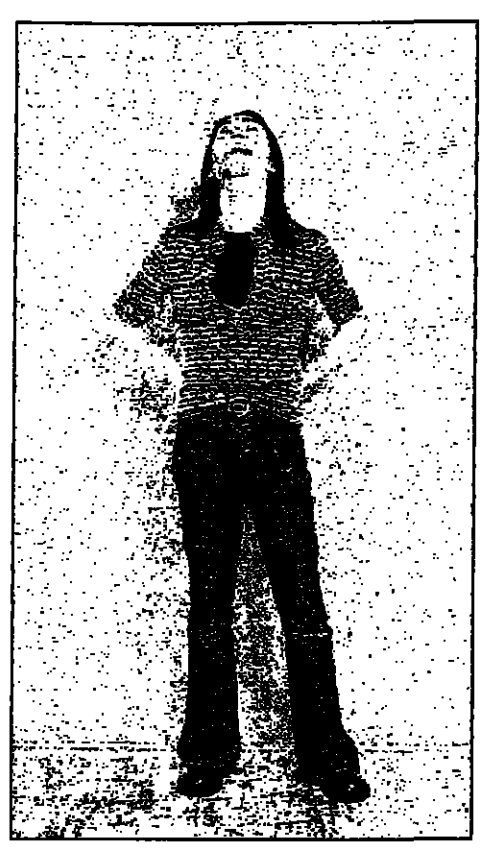
Sigourney may not be able to stomach men in big collars and hideously Seventies brown, rust, orange and gold. They don't do it for most people. But for those who didn't live through the decade that style forgot, the Seventies looks remarkably, well, stylish. Of course, many of the decade's fashions were downright ugly, but for young fashion folk, that is the attraction. Huge, rounded collars, wide, spoozy-shaped shoes, chunky platforms, colossal flares, pearly green eyeshadow, and jarring colour clashes: just let us get at 'em!

Of course, films such as *Boogie Nights* are a godsend to shops specialising in retro clothing. The Pop Boutique has clothes from the Fifties to the Seventies: it is even doing good business in vintage tracksuit tops. A certain Fila tracksuit top like the one worn by Björn Borg sells for between £70 and £80, bobbles and all. Nylon shirts and polyester flares are also hot property, not to mention a tad moist and sweaty, too. Prices start at £14.50 for super fly-collared shirts and £16.50 for the sort of pants that some of us hoped might never see the light of day again. A lot of Pop Boutique's customers are after clothes for one-off Seventies nights. Others are committed to the decade full time.

London's clubland has also discovered that the Seventies are big business. The names of the "nights" say it all: Carwash, Voulez Vous, Starsky and Hutch, Groove Train and Good Times are just a few hot spots where a convincingly flyaway outfit is a free ticket to trip the light fantastic.

At the Electric Ballroom in London's Camden Town on Saturday nights, Saturday Night Fever offers free entry to anyone who makes an effort to dress up like John Travolta, or somebody from *Abigail's Party*. The Independent's stylist, Sophia Neophitou, took a suitcase of choice pieces from the decade to add a touch of fashion class to the retro clubbers. They all loved the dressing-up box, whose contents ranged from flared jeans to a silk, draped evening dress by Bill Gibb, a collector's item and a snip at £175 from Steinberg and Tolkein on London's King's Road. Mark Steinberg has a keen interest in both film and fashion. *Boogie Nights* will undoubtedly increase demand for vintage Seventies clothing, although Steinberg attributes the revival to last year's movie, *LA Confidential*, the jewellery for which all came from the London shop.

"The Seventies has never really been out of fashion," he says. And judging by the designers – including John Galiano and New Yorker Anna Sui – who have been scouting around shops such as the Pop Boutique for inspiration, the look is here to stay.



Photographer's assistant: Philippa
Styling: Sophia Neophitou
Styling assistant: Warren Noronha
Shot on location at Saturday Night Fever, every Saturday at the Electric Ballroom, 184 Camden High Street, London

NW1, £7, £5 to members; free if you dress in Seventies outfits. 10.30pm-3am (0171-485 9006)

Clockwise from main picture: Laura wears jacket and culottes suit, £34, shiny polo-

neck top, £12, beige boots, £39, all from Blackout II, 51 Endell Street, London WC2 (0171-240 5006)

Dawn wears zip-front dress, £375, by Pucci, from Steinberg and Tolkein, 193 King's Road, SW3 (0171-376 3660)

Asaki wears top, £35, from Cenci, 31 Monmouth Street, London WC2 (0171-836 1400); flared jeans, £35, from Pop Boutique, 6 Monmouth Street, London WC2; Dr Martens shoes, model's own

Laura wears gold Spandex

trousers, 20p, from The Cat Shelter open-day jumble sale. Sheffield: scarf top, £220, by Pucci, from Steinberg and Tolkein, as before

Donna wears pink silk evening dress, £175, by Bill Gibb, from Steinberg and Tolkein, as

before; cream shoes, £24, from Blackout II, as before

Donna wears pink sequin boob tube, £10, pink sequin necklace, £5, pink sequined bag, £10, all from Cornucopia, 12 Upper Tachbrook Street, London SW1 (0171-828 5752)

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Where Robert De Niro rubs shoulders with Pavarotti and Del Boy

There's fame present, past and wannabe. And then there are those who pretend. *Serena Mackesy* spent a night in the strange twilight world of lookalikes.

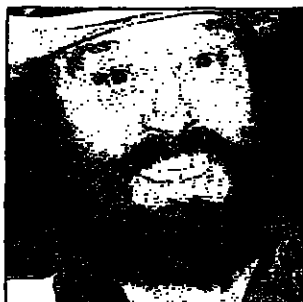
The pavement outside Stringfellow's night-club often heaves with gawping *News of the World* readers; but this crowd looked as though they'd been hand-picked for slackness of jaw, dullness of skin. And as the limos pulled up, they rustled and grunted: "Ooh, ooh. It's Lily Savage. Ooh! *Men Behaving Badly*! Oozat? Diana Ross or Gloria Gaynor?"

They couldn't have been much more excited if it had been the real thing. Which just goes to show that lookaliking, a job remit somewhere below drag-queening and above karaoke on the glamour scale, really works. Stringy's was playing host to the Celebrity Lookalikes New Year Ball, organised by Celebrity Lookalikes, an agency with 200 dressers-up on its list. A few hundred bookers, hacks, B-listers and confused-looking Stringy's regulars were piling in through those sacred doors to have their hands pumped by Jaws from the James Bond series (one Gary Tiplady, complete with metal teeth) - an experience somewhat akin to getting caught between two sides of gammon - and, appropriately enough, drink ersatz champagne with the "stars".

My eye lit on Chris Quinten, the former Brian Tisley of *Coronation Street*. He looked frightfully busy. I turned to my companion. "Who on earth would want to hire a Chris Quinten look-alike?" He looked closely, did a double-take. "No, that's the real Chris Quinten." The boy's come a long way from Weatherfield.

Descending the stairs to the basement dance floor were Patsy and Edina from *Ab Fab*. Patsy swigged from an empty champagne bottle, and they played their roles in grating Essex accents. "Ooh, darling, party!" "Ooh yes, darling. Look! Cliff Richard! Cliff Hello, darling!" Cliff, slight and toothy, chatted to the Duchess of York and the late, great Princess of Wales. Nicky Lillie, one of the more convincing Dianas on the circuit, has been suffering a bit of a lull of late; most enquiries since September have been from American chat shows. The agency, though, expects Diana to take on the iconic status of Elvis or Marilyn Monroe once the furore has died down, and she may have a healthy second career opening supermarkets.

At the bar, Robert De Niro fought Robert Mitchum and Clint Eastwood for the atten-



Double vision: from top, Rodney and Del Boy, Pavarotti, Patsy and Edina, Lily Savage, Evans and Branson, Tina Turner, Laurel and Hardy Jason Bye

tion of the staff. A cross-looking black guy with dreadlocks turned to his friend. "You know what she said to me? She said, 'You look like someone. Who are you then?' 'Bloody cheek,' his friend snorted indignantly.

I knew how he felt. Earlier, someone had pointed at me and shrieked "Barbra Streisand!" One of my mates was nursing his ego in a corner after being accused of being Mr Bean.

Holding my drinks aloft and catching the slipstream of a girl in a tutu, I bumped tum-tums with Pavarotti. He rolled his eyes. "I feel more like a Ford Escort than a Maestro," he said. In real life he is Colin Miller, a florist from Burton-on-Trent. He has gone to Llangollen with *The Big Breakfast*, and done two hours' work for a Swiss TV company that garnered him £1,200.

"People want to touch you and have their photo taken with you. In Llangollen this guy from New Zealand said he'd waited for years to meet Pavarotti, but now he'd met me, he didn't mind." The two Pammy Andersons, meanwhile, marching around in identical *Barb Wire* suits, nipples akimbo, simply looked like normal Stringy's punters.

Rodney and Del Boy grabbed a Pammy and posed for a picture, Rodney pointing his headlight specs down her cleavage. "What's it like being a lookalike, then?" I asked Del Boy. "Lovely jubbly," he replied.

"How much money can you make from this game?" "Woocer." He tapped the side of his nose. "Can't say. No income tax, no VAT, know what I mean?"

At which point, the crowd surged forward to watch Hot Spice, "the UK's top Spice Girls tribute band". We sat on a step to watch on a screen, and a tutu'd waitress approached. "Excuse me, can you not sit on the stairs, please?" "Where can we sit, then?" "I can get you a table if you like." "Oh, OK." "You'll have to buy champagne," she said firmly. Heading for the exit, we passed Tom Cruise and his lovely wife, who stood, in shocking breach of protocol, with their backs to Princess Madge. A man was questioning them. "There's a lot of speculation," he said, "that you are gay and you are a lesbian." "I'll have to have a few beers before I answer that," said Tom. Nicole wrinkled her lovely little nose. "No comment," she said frostily.

Two girls looked sourly at the screen as the Spices slapped bits of themselves to "Who-who-who-who-who do you think you are?" "Well," said one, eyeing Ginger's vpl. "You can tell it's not them. Geri would never wear knickers under her catsuit."



Sultan: 'Besides the defendant I am the most unpopular person in the courtroom. I get yelled at and screamed at and spit on'

Xavier Ruiz

The Sultan of psycho is not afraid

Faye Sultan works with terrifying people and leads an amazing life. Ann Treneman met her, read her book and has her telephone number. And so does Ben, but he mustn't tell Brenda.

Faye Sultan looks an entirely ordinary person. Black and white jacket, black trousers, fortyish, long hair. American accent, easy laugh, sensible shoes. She is a forensic psychologist and makes the predictable joke when I suggest she sit on the couch. "I point to the tape recorder. 'Of course I don't mind. I'm a shrink. We get taped all the time!' By the time the tape is turned off any idea that Faye Sultan and the word 'ordinary' should ever appear in the same sentence again have been removed. For ever.

For starters she knows many of the sickest murderers in America and these are not passing acquaintances. It may be her job to find out what makes these people - most would say monsters - tick but surely this

does not need to extend to such things as giving them her phone number? This becomes even more puzzling when she tells me that having an unlisted number is her one attempt at privacy. What is the point of an unlisted number if the likes of Horace Benjamin Beech, a schizophrenic double murderer whose alternative personality is named Brenda, can ring at any time? Faye Sultan is careful to explain the rules to me: "Ben is allowed to call my house but Brenda is not. I don't want to talk to her. She is really not very nice." No, evidently not. After all she killed two elderly women in North Carolina. Not the kind of person you want to have a chat with.

"You know I've never been in danger because of any of those people," says Faye rather patiently. "The danger does not come from the defendants. It is from the general public." During a controversial trial her office can get death threats. When she speaks out against the death penalty there are more. She says that this speaks volumes to her: "This says to me that we live in a terribly, terribly violent culture."

Actually she may have added a few more "terribly"s in there and soon I know why. As a child growing up in New York and Long Island she was beaten regularly and blamed for just about everything by her mother and step-father. She escaped, via the kindness of strangers and teachers, to university at the age of 16. She is not in contact with her mother and is convinced that only the luck of the draw separates her from the defendants she visits in prison. Monsters are made, not born. Evil is not in our genes, it is in our homes. Nor is murder only something that criminals indulge in. The state kills too, though Faye Sultan does her best to stop it doing so.

I ask if people call her a wishy-washy liberal and she laughs. "How about bleeding-heart candy ass? That is the most common phrase. People say to me, how can you make excuses. I say this isn't about excuses, my job is to explain. My job is to present to juries those factors which lead this individual down this path. Besides the defendant I am the most unpopular person in the courtroom. It can be very unpleasant. I get yelled at and screamed at and spit on. By

whom? The attorneys. Sometimes I think you'd have to come from a pretty terrible background to think it was an OK way to spend a day."

It occurs to me that she might be right and then she erupts again. "But it is very important that they hear the truth about how this person became this monster. He wasn't hatched. He was cultivated. We don't want to hear about how we did the grooming. Often when I am testifying I am watching jurors cry. They don't want to hear it. I didn't either. But we are building prisons as quickly as we can and at some point we need to figure out how we breed violence."

Faye Sultan wrote a book about this called *The Making of a Monster*. No one wanted to publish it. Then her co-writer had an idea. Why not put the same ideas into a thriller? And so they did: it is called *Over the Line* and the heroine is suspiciously like Faye Sultan. It all has the distinct air of a "made for TV" movie. But Faye herself is more interesting than that because she knows more than her fictional heroine with the terrific cheekbones and worry-

ing nightmares will ever know. She has seen a man die in the gas chamber. She has interviewed a "sane" man who had to be chained to the wall so he wouldn't hurt her. She has met Benjamin and Brenda and many many more.

A lot of the time, she says, Benjamin sits with his back to her. "He says things like: I come and I go, I come and I go. If I ask him how he is, he says I don't know. Isn't that sad? He doesn't know." Then one day Ben turned and looked at an umbrella and said: "What a lovely dress that is," and Faye Sultan knew that another personality had entered the room. I look confused and she explains: "The reality is that part of my job is to sit with someone until they are ready to connect - and that can take hundreds of hours - and part of Mr Beech connecting was that he let us meet this woman who had committed all these murders and she apparently thought the umbrella was a very nice dress." See what I mean? Extraordinary.

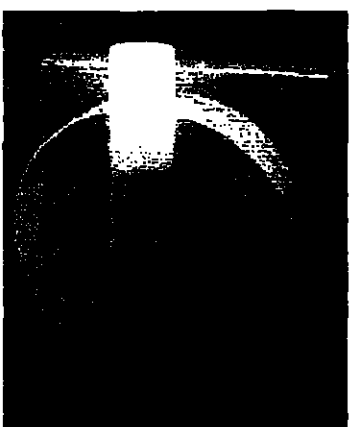
'Over the Line' by Faye Sultan and Teresa Kennedy is published by Fourth Estate at £9.99.

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Whether you're away on holiday, coming home after dark or waking up in the middle of the night, this pluglight is the perfect dusk to dawn light. Simply plug into a socket and leave it switched on. Once dusk falls, the neon light will automatically switch itself on until the morning, when it will turn itself off again. Ideal as a comfort light, it gives a warm orange glow which is bright enough to see by but will not keep you awake. Suitable for bedrooms, landings and hallways, it makes a great security device when you are away on holiday or coming home late in the evening.

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Now that the first fine layer of dust is forming on the fat file on my desk labelled "DIVORCE", a little normality is beginning to return to our weekends. *Bunny and I* can spend a morning pottering between chicken house and kitchen. Buster can cycle round the yard for hours, singing tunelessly, with a demented boxer dog bouncing under his wheels. I can take all of Saturday morning to make two loaves of bread, drink coffee and flick through the Next catalogue. And there are other kinds of normality, too, new little homely rituals to do with VNC: lying in bed and listening to The Smiths (no, really, it's nice), watching *The Simpsons on family* on Fridays, dancing round the kitchen to disco hits of the Seventies (Bunny and Buster are now word perfect on "Dee Dee, Ess Dee Oh").

But just as we are all settling into a new groove of domestic ordinariness, I can see that another upheaval is inevitable, because this new life deserves more than just a kind of improvised camping out in the ruins of the old. We are going to have to move.

When Beloved first went, I thought I could scrape him off the surface of this house like steamed lining-paper off a bathroom wall. I used his desk-top to make a tree house for the kids, put the wedding photos behind the spare room wardrobe and painted what had been our bedroom a colour he would have loathed (bright orange with distressed gold window frames.

No, I'm serious, I did). And to my surprise it's been pretty successful. After the first few months I stopped seeing the Beloved holograms in doorways, because the furniture and colour schemes in them didn't match the new look of the house. But what I can't change, without bulldozers and planning permission, is the outside. The lane sine-waving up the hill like a brontosaurus's back will always be the lane where he told me he was leaving. The wood I see from my bedroom window will always be the place where we took our last walk together.

There's VNC's feelings to be considered, too. We have made just one

public appearance in the village together, at the end-of-term carol concert at Buster's and Bunny's school. We were late, so our entrance was rather higher profile than planned, and the compare-and-contrast looks VNC had to endure would have been enough to chill any ordinary man's marrow. We need to go to a place where Beloved and I haven't danced at the PTA ceilidh.

The other reason for leaving is VNC's job. He'll be working long, hard, out-of-doors-hours too far away to commute daily. He could do it weekly. But I've done that one. I've got the T-shirt, the pop-up book, the



BELOVED AND BONK Diary of a divorce

matching bikini, the video and of course the divorce to prove it. I don't want to do that boyfriend-girlfriend stuff of catching up with the edited highlights of each other's lives over dinner out in your best frock once a week. I want to do waking up on a Tuesday morning with a cold sore and bad hair and still being able to say "Good morning" as if you mean it.

But to get our fresh start together in a new place we have to go through the excruciating process of selling and buying a house. We have to go to Planet Estate Agent where every lawn is laid, every bathroom is a benefit and every house a property.

Thank God I've used to it. I've done it on average every three years since I was seven, so one more time around won't hurt. Buster and Bunny, however, are not so laid-back. VNC and I are, of course, the high priest and priestess of the path to new domestic enlightenment. Buster and Bunny are only reluctant postulants. Like all children they are profoundly conservative, so the unknown territory of new schools, new friends and new houses is about as inviting to them as a holiday at the Chernobyl reactor. Selling the house and dovetailing that with buying the right new one will be like CSE dumping-throwing compared with the A-level physics of convincing the kids that it's a neat deal.

Stevie Morgan

Billie Dove

Lillian Bohry (Billie Dove), actress: born New York 14 May 1903; married 1923 Irvin Willat (marriage dissolved 1929), 1933 Robert Kenaston (died 1973; one son, one adopted daughter), 1973 John Miller (marriage dissolved); died Woodland Hills, California 31 December 1997.

Billie Dove was one of the greatest stars of the silent days of Hollywood. At the end of the 1920s she was voted, with Clara Bow, as America's most popular actress, and at the box office exceeded even the drawing power of Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson and Greta Garbo. The singer Billie Holiday named herself after her.

Billie Dove was born Lillian Bohry in New York City in 1903. (Her brother, Charles, became a cameraman in Hollywood.) Her parents were Swiss immigrants. She visited Switzerland as a child, and spoke German before she spoke English. Her parents were Lutheran and their church organised sports events: the girls on the basketball team called her "Billie". The family lived far from the theatre district, but nearby was an open-air movie house, known as an Ardmore. Here she was entranced by serials and was smitten by Bobby Harro in *The Birth of a Nation*.

"I had always liked the movies," she told the film historian William Drew. "All of the girls wanted to be in the movies. I didn't want to be. I knew I was going to be. I'm not psychic, but there have been instances in my life when I have been absolutely sure of something and this was one of them."

A neighbour worked as an extra at Fort Lee, across the Hudson from New York City, and Billie's mother had her registered at the studios. One of her first appearances was in *Joan of Plattsburg* (1918), a Mabel Normand picture. The director instructed her to rush up to her brother and kiss him. She couldn't wait for the picture to come out so she could surprise her friends. As it happened the surprise was hers: the cameraman had merely photographed her legs.

Billie was an exceptionally beautiful girl, and was in great demand as a model by such eminent artists as Charles Dana Gibson, Howard Chandler Christy and James Montgomery Flagg, who called her "The Dove" because she was so lovely yet so shy. "Billie Dove" soon became her professional name.



'The Dove' in 1928: 'so lovely yet so shy'. In one month she received 37,320 fan letters, beating Clara Bow's record

Photograph: Hulton Getty

The impresario Florenz Ziegfeld saw her portrait in an advertisement and called her for an audition. Still determined to break into pictures, Billie haughtily informed him that she had no interest in being a chorus girl, so Ziegfeld gave her a featured role. Her timing could not have been more propitious. Eddie Cantor, the star of *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1919, had gone on strike with many of the girls and Ziegfeld had to replace them in a hurry.

On the opening night, Billie was met at the stage door not by a suitor carrying flowers but by her mother. Billie told her firmly that she knew how to get home on her own, and her mother never did that again. Yet it was one of the few hints she ever had of her concern. Her parents displayed no affection towards her or towards each other. They had separated before she entered show business and neither of them revealed to her the facts of life. The result was that she was dangerously naive; at the onset of her period, she was convinced she was dying. Alarmed by what she heard from her far more sophisticated showgirl friends,

Billie decided to avoid sexual encounters until she was married. Ziegfeld she considered a kind man, but he had a firm rule that any girl moonlighting in pictures would be fired. Billie took the risk of playing an extra role to help another girl who had double-booked. The film people offered her more substantial parts and she resigned from the *Follies*. She met a press agent who exploited her Ziegfeld training by booking her in for personal appearances with her pictures. The scheme led to a year's contract with Metro, and a platonic relationship with one of the heads of the studio, Joe Engel.

Her second picture for that company was *All the Brothers Were Valiant* (1923), with Lon Chaney. The director was Irvin Willat: he had fallen for Billie Dove from his first glimpse in the *Follies*. Willat was the Sam Peckinpah of his day: he had won notoriety for a propaganda film in which a U-boat commander was skinned alive. He cast Dove in this whaling story, shot in San Francisco Bay.

"We were on location for a whole month and all the way back it was marry me, marry me, marry me," a million times until I finally said "yes" just to stop him. But I liked him - I liked everybody."

On her next picture, at Fox, her leading man was John Gilbert, who would eventually succeed Valentino as the Great Lover. He also treated her to marry him. "I said, 'Sure', not kidding exactly, but, of course, I wouldn't have married him. I wouldn't have married any actor, as a matter of fact, no matter how much I liked them. But he took it seriously."

When Gilbert was reconciled with his wife, Leatrice Joy, the producer Paul Bern was despatched to break the news. Billie Dove couldn't have cared less. She was having the time of her life. She and Willat were married in 1923. "We were fine," she said, ambiguously. "but it was not the sort of love you have in marriage." She spent much of her time in the Mojave Desert, making westerns with cowboy stars like Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson and Jack Holt. "Whenever one western was finished, they'd say, 'Where is Billie Dove?' and the next day I'd be in another one. It didn't make any difference to me. I was in motion pictures and I loved it."

In 1925, while making *Wild Horse Mesa* (with a 15-year-old Douglas Fairbanks Jr), she met the famous author Zane Grey. "He wrote me a beautiful letter in which he said that I was so much like his favourite character."

The previous year, Dove had starred in Zane Grey's *Wanderer of the Wasteland*, directed by Willat and shot entirely in two-colour Technicolor. It was this picture which led to her most celebrated role in another early Technicolor film, *The Black Pirate* (1926), directed by Al Parker. Douglas Fairbanks had wanted Evelyn Brent or Esther Ralston - there was even talk of his using a non-professional - but he was so impressed with the way her flawless complexion photographed in colour that he gave her the part. "All I did was stand round and look scared, but it was a good picture, really good. The colour in it was so beautiful. Every scene was a work of art."

Mary Pickford, then married to Fairbanks, would not permit him to kiss any of his leading ladies in a picture, and she stepped in, wearing Dove's costume, for the final clinch.

Her next picture was at Universal - *The Marriage Clause* (1926), directed by Lois Weber, one of Hollywood's few women directors. "I'd never heard of her before, but she was the best director I ever had. If I'd had anything to say about it, I would have had her direct all my pictures." She was rewarded by exceptional reviews.

Weber also directed *Sensation Seekers* (1926), in which she played a flapper. To the amusement of the crew, it turned out that Dove did not smoke and had to be taught how; unfortunately this was enough to hook her on nicotine. Willat was a fanatical anti-smoker and it helped to break up the marriage.

After working with Eddie Cantor and Clara Bow in *Kid Boots* (1926), Billie made a picture for Harry Cohn - "it was the first picture Columbia could get into a big house, not because of me, but because of Bert Lytell". By this time, all the studios were after her. She considered MGM, but realised she would be playing the same roles as Norma Shearer. So she signed with First National. It was generally

assumed in Hollywood that she was to play the lead as the world's most beautiful woman in Alexander Korda's satire *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, but he gave the role to his wife, Maria. She was hardly convincing, and Korda returned to Billie Dove for three more pictures with much more success. The *New York Times* critic, Mordaunt Hall, wrote that she played in these films with "considerable charm and intelligence".

In one month she received 37,320 fan letters, beating Clara Bow's record. But she discovered that stardom meant brutally long hours - she often had to stay at the studio until midnight and be up next morning at five. Her marriage came under further strain. "We never had any big fight. Still it wasn't a passionate love affair. So we had a sensible agreement to separate and I went to live with my mother."

One of Hollywood's myths alleges that Billie Dove was a casualty of sound, but she made the transition so well that First National extended her contract. She made a total of 11 talkies.

She had legions of admirers. Marion Davies, mistress of William Randolph Hearst and another Follies veteran, introduced her to Howard Hughes, a multi-millionaire industrialist, movie producer and aviation enthusiast who was still only 22. The tall, gangly young man simply stared at her. "I thought, 'Good God! Is this the guy they're talking about who's making *Hell's Angels*?' I was glad when he left the table."

Dove only realised he was serious when he appeared at every nightspot she went to. "Then I got to know him and found out that he was brilliant, charming and had a lovely sense of humour." Willat, however, refused to give Billie Dove a divorce - "I was very much in love with my wife," he said. "She was a great girl. My friend [Hughes] decided he wanted her, and he had so much more money than I did and I think she did much better. It was better for her but worse for me, because she had so much to do with helping me."

In 1930, in one of the most extraordinary transactions in Hollywood history, Hughes paid Willat \$325,000 in thousand-dollar bills to give Billie a divorce. "I begged Howard not to," said Billie Dove, "but there was nothing I could do once he gave the money to Irvin. I felt like I'd been bought and sold."

Dove had become dissatisfied with her pictures at First

National. Howard Hughes bought up her contract but her first picture for him, *The Age for Love* (1931), was an embarrassing flop. She was happier with *Cock of the Air* (1932), which exploited her talent for comedy. Alas, the Hays Office found it too risqué and insisted on savage and damaging cuts, and this flopped as well. Some historians consider that Hughes ruined her career.

After three years they split up. Dove steadfastly refused to reveal why. "It had nothing to do with any man and nothing to do with any woman - it was really such a tiny thing that you wouldn't believe it if I told you." Hughes is said to have regarded her as the love of his life and they remained on friendly terms.

She had never flown with Hughes, being afraid of aeroplanes, but now she took flying lessons. She met Robert Kenaston, a handsome young millionaire rancher, who invited her on a round-the-world trip. On her return, she was persuaded by Irving Thalberg to play with Marion Davies in *Blondie of the Follies* (1932). She regarded her part as the best of her career, but when the picture was run for Mr Hearst, he growled, "Well, it's a good Billie Dove picture". Panic followed this verdict: the finale was scrapped, writers were offered to change the story to boost Marion Davies's part and Billie's role was transformed. "When it was finished I was the heavy and I never played a heavy in my life. I think I would have sued but Marion and Mr Hearst were my friends and I couldn't do that to them."

Blondie of the Follies was Billie Dove's last picture, although she insisted that her retirement was not the result of that disappointment. She married Bob Kenaston in 1933 and her son, Robert Allen Kenaston, became an actor. She adopted a daughter, Gail. Dividing her time between Los Angeles and Palm Springs, Dove took up painting and writing. She was an avid reader, she had met Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald at the Willat house and Dorothy Parker had inscribed a book, "To Billie Dove - God loves her, I do, too!" She was also fascinated by poetry. She took a course in creative writing at UCLA and became a successful author under the name Lillian Kenaston. She received many awards: the one that amused her most she received in 1962 for an advertising slogan. Her first prize was a small part in a movie.

— Kevin Brownlow

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Ramón Sampedro

Ramón Sampedro, campaigner: born Porto do Son, Galicia 5 January 1943; died Boiro, Galicia 12 January 1998.

Ramón Sampedro, a sturdy young seaman about to be married, went for a swim at his local beach in Spain's remote north-western region of Galicia. But that day in 1968 he misjudged the familiar shore and, dashed upon rocks, he

was paralysed from the neck down.

The next 29 years he lay paralysed in bed, dependent on his family for every need. He became something of a national hero in his tenacious campaign for the right to receive help to die with dignity. Sampedro was the first Spaniard to battle in the courts for the right to assisted euthanasia.

With constant good humour, he explained that his life as "a head attached to a useless scrap

of flesh" was actually a torment. "I am trapped in a dead body. My life is absurd and meaningless. As a rational person I want a rational death."

Sampedro started his fight in 1993. In 1994 he appealed to Spain's Constitutional Court, which dismissed his case on a technicality. He then went to the European Court of Human Rights who said that the resources of the Spanish courts had not been exhausted.

Meanwhile the Netherlands,

the American state of Oregon, and Australia's Northern Territory all gave permission for assisted deaths. In November 1996 Galicia's provincial court of La Coruña agreed to reopen Sampedro's case and, with a clutch of helpers and a special vehicle supplied by an association for the handicapped, he made a rare sortie to attend the hearing in person. But this too ended in disappointment.

Sampedro started to write "to stop myself from going mad" by using a pointer held in his mouth, and in 1996 he published a book, *Cartas desde el Infierno* ("Letters from Hell"), about his experiences, his feelings of bitterness and his desire to die.

Sampedro had an extraordinarily alert and sociable personality. One miserable November day in 1996 he participated in a television debate in the Galician capital Santiago de Compostela. The wild westerlies were howling and he joked that they must

wrap him up warm as he felt the cold.

After the show, he asked me to light him a cigarette, and with it clamped between his teeth, his gaze warm and lively, he explained why he drew no comfort from the Church. "It's all right for those who feel protected and guided by their religion, but I'm an agnostic. I'm a sailor, I love liberty. All I want is a welcoming harbour after death, a haven from this arid life that is for me only suffering." As he was

wheeled back to his vehicle through horizontal sleet, he smiled and said "I can feel on my face. Give me a kiss." So I did.

Some months ago, he resolved to decide his fate, and moved into the nearby house of a woman friend. A secret autopsy will determine the circumstances of his death, but a letter and video apparently indicate that his desire for a dignified, assisted death was eventually fulfilled.

— Elizabeth Nash



Sampedro: 'letters from hell'

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

JACROFT: Professor Henry, aged 83 years, peacefully at home on 11 January. Funeral Service at the Free Church, Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, on Wednesday 21 January at 2pm. Family flowers only. Donations to North London Hospice, c/o Leverton & Sons, 624 Finchley Road, London NW11 7RR. 0181 455 4992.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 071-293 2002 or faxed to 071-293 2006, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Princess Royal, President, Royal Yachting Association, attends the International Boat Show, Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London SW5; as Patron, British School of Osteopathy, opens their new premises, 275 Borough High Street, London SE1; and, as President, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, attends the British Apparel Export Awards, the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London W2.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Captain Sir Alastair Aird, Comptroller to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 67; Professor Sir Melville Arnott, cardiologist, 89; Mr Peter Barkworth, actor, 69; Miss Carol Bellamy, executive director of Unicef, 56; Mr Richard Briers, actor, 64; Baroness Brooke of Ystradgellie, former vice-chairman, Conservative Party, 90; Lady Byford, former president, Conservative and Unionist Association, 57; Lord Catto, president, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell Group, 75; Miss Faye Dunaway, actress, 57; Mr Michael Foster MP, 53; Miss Marina Gieglad, ballerina, 34; Mr Brian Hardie, cricketer, 48; Sir Martin Holdgate, president, Zoological Society of London, 68; Sir Arthur Hoole, solicitor and former chairman of the College of Law, 74; Mr Jack Jones, singer, 60; Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, former Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, 70; Mr John Lever, Headmaster, Cranford School, 46; Mr Warren Mitchell, actor, 72; Mr Trevor Nunn, theatre director, 58; Sir Neil Pritchard, former ambassador to Thailand, 87; Sir Vernon Secombe, chairman, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, 70; Mlle Caterina Valente, guitarist and singer, 67; Mr Bill Werberniuk, snooker player, 42; Sir John Woodcock, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 66; Mr Roger Young, chief executive, Scottish Hydro-Electric, 54.

Anniversaries

Births: Benedict Arnold, soldier and traitor, 1741; The Rev Wilson

Carile, founder of the Church Army, 1847; Pierre Loti (Louis-Marie-Julien Viaud), novelist, 1850; Dr Albert Schweitzer, missionary surgeon, 1875; Hal Roach, film producer and director, 1892; Sir Cecil Walter Hardy Beaton, photographer and stage designer, 1904. Deaths: Edmund Halley, astronomer, 1742; John Pinder ("Peter Pinder"), physician and poet, 1819; Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, painter, 1867; Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), author, 1898; Humphrey DeForest Bogart, actor, 1957; Anais Nin, writer and poetess, 1977. On this day: The Great Frost Fair began on the Thames, 1205; Norway was ceded to the King of Sweden by the King of Denmark, 1814; an attempt was made on the life of Napoleon III by Felice Orsini, an Italian revolutionary, 1858; an earthquake in Jamaica destroyed Kingston and killed over 1,000, 1907; the musical show *The Boy Friend* was first produced, London, 1954; the law requiring motorists to wear seatbelts was made permanent, 1986. Today is the Feast Day of St Antony Pucci, St Barbasyas or Barbascemin, St Datus, St Felix of Nola, St Kentigern or Mungo, St Macrina the Elder, The Martyrs of Mount Sinai and St Sava.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museums: Miranda Neave, "Early 18th-century English Silver", 7.30pm.
Tate Gallery: Jonathan Blackwood, "The New English Art Club and Camden Town Group: approaches to British painting", 1pm.

LAW REPORT: 14 JANUARY 1998

Appeal will only lie where conviction is unsafe

The Court of Appeal no longer has the power, since the amendment of section 2(1) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 by the Criminal Appeal Act 1995, to allow an appeal against conviction if it did not think the conviction was unsafe but was dissatisfied in some way with the trial process, since there was no longer room for the separate notion of an "unsatisfactory" conviction. An accused who had changed his plea to guilty, following a ruling by the trial judge allowing the admission of prosecution evidence which made the case against him factually overwhelming, was not entitled to appeal against conviction, since his change of plea was not "founded upon" an erroneous ruling by the judge.

Regina v Chalkley and another (Court of Appeal Criminal Division), Lord Justice Auld, Mr Justice Bingham, Mr Justice Hoffmann, Mr Justice Nourse, Mr Justice Phillips, Mr Justice Rix, Mr Justice Steyn, Mr Justice Toulson, Mr Justice Ward, Mr Justice Wilson, Mr Justice Wood, Mr Justice Young, Mr Justice Zuckerman, Mr Justice Latham, Mr Justice Mummery, Mr Justice Neill, Mr Justice O'Connell, Mr Justice Palmer, Mr Justice Raftery, Mr Justice Sullivan, Mr Justice Thomas, Mr Justice Tuckey, Mr Justice Vaux, Mr Justice Wall, Mr Justice Ward, Mr Justice Wilson, Mr Justice Wood, Mr Justice Young, Mr Justice Zuckerman, Mr Justice Latham, Mr Justice Mummery, Mr Justice Neill, Mr Justice O'Connell, Mr Justice Palmer, Mr Justice Raftery, Mr Justice Sullivan, Mr Justice Thomas, Mr Justice Tuckey, Mr Justice Vaux, Mr Justice Wall, Mr Justice Ward, Mr Justice Wilson, Mr Justice Wood, Mr Justice Young, Mr Justice Zuckerman, Mr Justice Latham, Mr Justice Mummery, Mr Justice Neill, Mr Justice O'Connell, 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The teachers will not take lessons from Blunkett



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David Blunkett is in danger of slipping into a very alluring trap – the not uncommon ministerial delusion that you can transform Britain's schools by exhorting teachers to do what you think is right. Strange that one of Labour's most estimable and politically sensitive ministers should be so misled; but the signs are unmistakable.

The overwhelming majority of teachers are deeply committed to their work, and urgently want their children to succeed. But they have very firm views about what they believe are the best ways of making progress. At training colleges and on teaching practice they learn ways of managing classrooms and learning programmes, and then they go into a classroom, and for the rest of their teaching lives they are more or less on their own. For most, classroom autonomy is greatly treasured, and with some justice: we all know that the best teachers are those who develop their own unique style, and are allowed to get on with it in the way they

know best. But not all teachers, by definition, are among the best. In truth, most primary teachers are brilliant at tending and caring for their charges, but many are considerably less good at teaching them, either because they know too little, or because they afflict themselves with ineffective methods.

It is these teachers – the average ones in the middle who initially found the national curriculum too much – who protest that they need more time to teach the basics, and so needed to be released from the remainder of the new national curriculum. Mr Blunkett, who wants (indeed, has pledged) a steep rise in children's performance in the basics, has portrayed his relaxation of the national curriculum as an answer to teachers' earlier appeals.

The net effect of all this is likely to be confusion which, far from raising performance in the basics, may actually stifle the improved performance currently under way. Yesterday morning on Radio 4 one

teacher interpreted this move as an imposition of required hours teaching the three Rs in an offensively traditional way. Mr Blunkett does not want that to happen. Then the teacher unions interpreted his move as a delightful relief of the pressure on teachers, which is also not what Mr Blunkett intended. But no matter. He will be misunderstood by some, and understood by others. Some will resent his intervention, and others will feel that he has signed up to the "back to basics" crusade.

The point about learning the basics, as Mr Blunkett knows very well, and the teacher unions sensibly agree, is that no-one learns anything very much unless they have the tools. It is perfectly possible for all normally adept children to acquire "the basics" (functional literacy and numeracy) by the middle of their junior school, so long as the attention given to learning them is consistent, applied, and that it happens every day in a methodical manner. We could get badly side-tracked if

teachers interpret this latest government move as an excuse to return to boring lessons. The biggest single problem with most primary lessons is that the children find them uninspiring and unchallenging. One reason is that they are not given work that progresses from one task to a higher level task. Another is that there is still too much superficial project work and charming but undemanding group arts work. A third is that children in too many schools still spend too much time sitting in groups round tables supposedly working together, but actually distracting each other. Worse (as was pointed out in a different context yesterday) too many primary schools fill children's ears full of utterly unscientific nonsense, particularly about subjects like the environment, thinking they are imparting fundamental social values.

The way to change all this is to turn mediocre teachers into good ones by showing them that their old ways do not really work, and are often more tiring and

time-consuming than they need to be. They will not take that from a Secretary of State, however upstanding they think he is. Nor will they take it from professors, and authorities, however important and well-researched their papers are. They will only take it from their immediate colleagues and superiors. And they, in turn, will only learn it from their peers. Improve heads' understanding of what works, and you enable them to improve their teachers. Improve teachers, and you raise standards. The best way to achieve this might be to identify 250 top quality primary schools that are doing all the (very various) right things, and ensure that every other head and deputy head goes to see how they succeed. A version of this is happening in some degree, as inspectors carry good practice around with them from school to school. Replicate good practice, and standards will rise. No amount of exhortation will ever match that the evidence of teachers' own eyes.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Japanese apologies

Sir: David Walker ("For Japan, the art of forgetting is first to remember", 12 January) provides a generally balanced analysis of how the Japanese have faced their past. However, his claim that "the sum total of British iniquity since the abolition of the slave trade is impressively small" is questionable.

The British Empire abolished the slave trade 1807. In 1839-42 came the Opium War. Having won that war, Britain was to continue to export opium to China. As we enter the 20th century, we see the Amritsar massacre in India. (The Queen did not make an official apology during her state visit.)

The repercussions of British colonial rule are still felt in many parts of the world: African countries whose economies are still dependent on cash crops; Muslim-Hindu clashes, aggravated by the divide-and-rule policies Britain adopted. I would describe this as an iniquity that is "impressively large".

I agree with David Walker that there is an element of refusal in the Japanese to remember what happened in the past. There can be no excuses for the atrocities the Japanese committed during the war. However, his claim that Japanese schoolchildren, "never read about [Japan's imperialistic past] in their government-approved textbooks" is untrue. I was taught about this in a Japanese state school when I was 14. It is true that some "right-wing boot boys" and politicians in Japan are reluctant to acknowledge Japan's responsibility. However, Japanese historians have debated this matter, and there are many Japanese who do face up to their country's dark historical past. SHOGO SUZUKI, Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Sir: David Walker criticises the Japanese for their national amnesia while himself forgetting their continued rigid adherence to the "peace clause" of their constitution, which must take some resolution considering the unpredictable and aggressive military regime in North Korea, just across the Sea of Japan. A persistent commitment to non-rearmament is the Japanese way of ruing the violence of the past and represents a practical safeguard against a repeat performance. If the Japanese method of obfuscating post-war Japan differs from

the British method of being post-Empire Britain, it is because they are Japanese and we are British. David Walker's chief mistake is to doubt the normality of diplomatic dealings with a foreign country whose history, national characteristics and behaviour are not like our own. All diplomatic dealings are like that. LEO LEWIS, Keble College, Oxford

Sir: Half a century on, the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association are asking for "proper" compensation and renewed apologies using the "right" words. Well, tough! War is war. At least they came back. My own father didn't come back. He was cut in two by a grenade while trying to help a wounded comrade. We didn't expect apologies, or compensation.

What if the Japanese ask for an apology and compensation for Hiroshima and Nagasaki? ANJA HASSELL, Budleigh Salterton, Devon

Air and asthma

Sir: Your article "Pollution not to blame for childhood asthma" (9 January) implies that air pollution is only a problem in urban areas. Unfortunately for those living in rural areas, this is not the case.

Levels of ozone (summer-time smog) are higher in the countryside than in towns and cities. The pollutants which react to form ozone are pumped out in towns and cities, mainly from road traffic. However, chemical and meteorological factors such as wind direction mean that smog levels reach their peak in rural areas, many miles away from where the pollution is emitted.

Thus the pollution monitoring sites with the most breaches of government health standards for summertime smog in 1997 were at Lullington Heath in Sussex, Somerton in Somerset and Harwell in Oxfordshire.

The report suggests that al-

though air pollution does not cause asthma, it does aggravate the problem. This only strengthens the case for tough action to cut vehicle emissions, the main source of the problem.

The Government has the perfect opportunity to do just this by supporting the Road Traffic Reduction Bill when it is debated in Parliament at the end of the month. TONY BOSWORTH, Air Pollution Campaigner, Friends of the Earth, London N1

Sir: In my school in the 1930s no one had asthma. In my children's schools in the 60s and 70s, in a rural area, one in three or four had the disease.

The only thing not common to both groups was that we were not vaccinated as babies, whereas my children and their contemporaries had multi-vaccines at an early age. As asthma seems to be an allergic reaction I often wonder if the immune system is over-sensi-

tised at too early an age. All sorts of other allergies seem much more prevalent. Mrs J MATTHEW, Washington, Lincolnshire

Unseen asteroids

Sir: Your report on the effects of an oceanic asteroid impact on coastal areas ("Asteroids' tidal wave threat", 8 January).

A spacewatch programme to monitor the skies in order to detect potentially dangerous space objects and give advance warning (possibly tens of years) is technologically quite feasible. However, such a project would require a long-term commitment as well as a unique blend of skills and techniques. These include the capacity to build remotely controlled robotic 2m class telescopes incorporating advanced optical and infra-red imaging techniques, and proficiency in the science of celestial mechanics. Very few countries can muster such resources, but until recently the UK had this

capability in the form of the Royal Greenwich Observatory at Cambridge. Not any more.

Last July the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, the RGO's parent organisation, with the tacit consent by the Minister for Science, decided to close the RGO. An attempted management buy-out was turned down last December.

A modest investment would enable the UK to play a forefront role in a potentially life-saving enterprise. Instead, the required infrastructure is being dismantled. Does this not tell us something about the competence of the powers that be in scientific matters? Dr E J ZUIDERWIJK, Bar Hill, Cambridgeshire

Responsible drinking

Sir: Your article "Drunk driver sentenced to a change of address" (6 January), goes into great detail about an individual who has been prosecuted re-

peatedly in the US for violations of state drink driving laws. No mention is made in the report of any alcohol drinks brand yet you positioned a picture of our Budweiser beer brand in the heart of the story. As leaders in promoting alcohol awareness and education, we feel strongly that the implied association between Budweiser and your story was inappropriate.

As the world's largest brewer, Anheuser-Busch has a long-standing history of encouraging responsible drinking among adults who choose to drink and is committed to fighting alcohol abuse, drunk driving and underage drinking. The company has invested over £100m since the mid-1980s in community-based alcohol awareness and education programmes. WILLIAM McNULTY, Vice President and Regional Director, Anheuser-Busch International Inc, London EC2

Motson no racist

Sir: There is a facile self-righteousness in the recommendation by Trevor Phillips (Comment, 10 January) that the BBC chastise John Motson for his inability to recognise certain footballers, especially if they are black.

We are, by and large, best able to recognise and distinguish that with which we are familiar from a very young age. In my profession I meet people from many countries and more than once I have heard from some, especially from the Far East, that they find it difficult to tell one Westerner from another. Do I feel slighted? Do I note that their treatment of me and my fellow Caucasians is otherwise affected? Of course not.

Unfortunately, real racism generates a disposition on the part of some to spy it in the most inappropriate contexts. ERIC HARVEY, Tonnes, Devon

Sir: Trevor Phillips and others should recognise the world of difference between a racist insult such as "all black footballers look alike" and John Motson's self-deprecatory statement that he finds it "difficult" to distinguish between black players. Recognition of our inadequacies is a prerequisite to correcting them. CLARK KILLICK, Chelmsford

Save local chemists

Sir: Steven Round, marketing director of Superdrug Stores (letter, 12 January), quotes £180m per annum as the cost to the public of resale price maintenance on medicines. That is £3 per person per year. Hands up those who would not spend a penny a day to keep the local chemist's shop open. P W GOLDBERG, London NW5

Thing from the Deep

Sir: Has anyone noticed the quite uncanny resemblance between the Thing/Blot/Dinosaur/Giant Squid cast up on a Tasmanian beach (photograph, 10 January) and the Millennium Dome? Same shape, same mystery about its contents, same unpleasant odour? RICHARD LANNON, Bath

The real difficulty was that as a body, traders sell very few corpses



MILES KINGDON

Today I am concluding the post-modernist story I started yesterday which tells the tale of Captain Humphrey Wantage. Capt Humphrey Wantage was the first man ever to donate his body to science – to the science of meteorology, that is. But when the body arrives on his doorstep, Sir Basil Bellweather, head of the notorious London Weather Centre, can think of no use for the corpse, so has decided to forward it secretly to his colleagues at the London Metal Centre.

"What do you mean, there's a body for me at the front entrance?" shouted Sir George Mentzel down the phone.

"Just what I say, sir," said Nobby Lindup. "It's a body in a bag, and it's addressed to you."

You must have ordered it."

Sir George Mentzel was the head of the London Metal Centre, and Nobby Lindup was the doorman. Normally they would never have spoken to each other. Nobby had a deep contempt for Sir George, and Sir George was terrified of all doormen. But when a body turns up on the front door step, and you don't know what to do with it, the best thing is to go straight to the top. Nobby had gone straight by phone to the top, which was Sir George Mentzel's office on the 15th floor of the London Metal Centre, where Sir George Mentzel daily gazed out upon London and gave thanks to God that he was neither a name at Lloyd's nor a governor

of the Royal Opera House.

"Order a body? Why on earth would anyone want to order a body, Lindup?" shouted Sir George Mentzel down the phone.

"Well, necrophilia, sir," suggested Nobby. "Medical experiments? Vampirism? Prop for a horror movie? Practical joke on a friend? Experiments with the effect of bullets on the human body ...?"

"Do you really think I'm a necrophilia?" shrieked Sir George.

"Not at all, sir," said Nobby soothingly. "You just asked me why anyone would want to order a corpse, and as requested I was trying to think of possible reasons."

"Hmmm," said Sir

George, slightly mollified.

"What else does it say on the label?"

"I can't say for sure, sir," said Nobby.

"Well, can you say for sure?" said Sir George Mentzel. Author's note: Sir George Mentzel was of Austrian extraction and had spoken German as a boy, so he tended to treat the English language analytically in a way that the English do not, and this meant that he thought it was funny to say "Can you say for sure?" He was wrong, of course, but as he was the boss, nobody dared tell him.

"No, I can't," said Nobby. The fact of the matter was that Nobby Lindup was almost totally illiterate, which was why he had remained a doorman at

the London Metal Centre. Truth to tell, he had been under the impression when he joined the London Metal Centre that he was going to work at the London Metal Centre, which had overjoyed him, as he was mad about all sorts of sports trophies, and rosettes, and cup-winners' medals, and military decorations.

"I'd better come down and have a look," grumbled Sir George.

He had to agree when he got down to the ground floor lobby that Nobby had a point. It did look like a body. It was in a bag with his name on it. And there was a message saying that the late departed wanted to give his body to science, to the science of metallurgy.

"What use would a body be to a metallurgist?" cried Sir George, and as Nobby Lindup opened his mouth and prepared to think up half a dozen reasons, Sir George quickly carried on: "No, don't tell me! Just think of some way of getting rid of the body!"

"Well, sir," said Nobby, "why can't we re-donate it? This bloke wants to donate his body to science, but I don't think it matters much which science. Why metallurgy? Why not methodology? Or Metaphysics?"

"I don't think metaphysics is a science," murmured Sir George. "In fact, I don't think methodology is either. And I don't see why it has to begin with an 'm'."

"What about mineralogy?" said Nobby, ignoring this last stricture. "That would be perfect. Send the body round to the London Mineral Centre, with the label changed to read, 'I have always wanted to donate my body to the science of mineralogy'."

Even Sir George had to admit it was a great idea. And that was how the body of the late Capt Humphrey Wantage came to be found outside the London Mineral Centre.

"We've got a body down here, sir," said Alf Turnbull, illiterate doorman of the London Mineral Centre, on the phone to the head of the outfit, Sir Donald ...

But I think you get the drift of the story.

No to an affluence test, yes to taxing benefits



**ROY
HATTERSLEY
TARGETING
THE POOR**

Even if the social security budget were to be increased by 10 per cent – a less likely event under the new government than it was under the old – the present pattern of payment would fail to meet the needs of the very poor. And should the total welfare bill be reduced, equity requires that low income families be protected from the cuts. The price will have to be paid by the richer recipients. Targeting benefits on those who need them most is politically dangerous and administratively difficult. But it is right and necessary and one "tough choice" which will help, rather than penalise the disadvantaged and dispossessed.

That is not an argument in favour of Harriet Harman's "affluence test" – which, as she described it, would totally exclude the highest earners from maternity benefit. An arbitrary division between the haves and have-nots would produce, at best, a two-tier welfare system and, at worst, a safety net which was designed to catch only paupers. Putting aside the humiliation of receiving a modern version of outdoor relief – which would certainly reduce the take-up rate – limiting payment to the poor is a certain prescription for more cuts in the social security budget. If the affluent middle classes – who also happen to be target voters – do not qualify for any benefit, the pressure to reduce their contribution to the cost of welfare will become irresistible.

In the past, the dilemma was resolved – at least in part – by the taxation system. The rich appropriated a disproportionate share of all public spending – education, health and housing as well as social security. But what they received was kept in crude balance by what they contributed. With the top rate of income tax held at 40 per cent, the excuse of compensating contributions is more difficult to sustain. When New Labour lists the new circumstances that require fresh thought, the reduced level of direct taxation has to be put side by side with the increase in private pensions plans. The problem, caused by the changes in taxation levels, has to be solved by their revision.

It is easy enough to argue that, for example, child benefit is paid to many families who do not need it. Were it to be designated as "taxable" income, the poorest families would receive payment in full, while the richest received only 60 per cent. Income tax is the means test about which we all feel least resentment. So, whilst some families would complain about the denial of benefit to the rich, no-one would denounce the affront it caused to the poor.

Taxing child benefit, at its present rate, would raise an extra £675m – enough for an average increase in the weekly payment of £1.70 per child. For a three-child family liv-

ing below the poverty line, an extra £5 would provide necessities that they are now denied. Unfortunately, those families would only be better off if income support were to be increased by a corresponding amount, for under the present system the improvement in child benefit would be matched by an equivalent reduction. Were we to tax child benefit, use the revenue to increase the basic rate and leave income support at its present level, only 5 per cent of lone parents would gain. Twenty five per cent would actually lose, leaving 70 per cent with their position unchanged.

The moral is clear enough. If limiting benefits to "those who really need them" is just a way of cutting public expenditure, the object can, in part, be achieved by simple adjustments to the tax system. If, on the other hand, the real hope is to concentrate limited resources on the most necessitous families, two initiatives have to go hand in hand. Money can certainly be saved by reducing, or eliminating altogether, the payments made to the rich. But that, in itself, cannot finance the improvement in benefit levels which are essential to the poor. Without an increase in income support they would gain nothing. The increases could only be financed by higher rates of tax.

The arguments about taxing child benefit are complicated by philosophical doubts as well as its fiscal consequences. The scheme was introduced with the overt intention of subsidising families with children – irrespective of their income – rather than alleviating poverty. It replaced a tax allowance which related the level of help to the size of earnings and, in the jargon of the time, transferred the payment "from wallet to purse". Child benefit was paid to mothers. Even in the age of working women – a habit which the Government is determined to encourage – including it within the tax calculation would, in many cases, divert it back into the wallet. A rational discussion about the future of child benefit requires us to begin from a clear understanding of what it is intended to do.

The myriad difficulties of performing what seems the simple task of helping those in greatest need illustrates the basic flaw in our social security system. Since its inception, in very different social circumstances, no overriding principle had guided the constant changes in levels and types of benefit. Some payments are received "by right" – a popular fiction encouraged by the belief that National Insurance contributions "funds" the retirement pensions. Others, like child benefit itself, are intended to help with the cost of desirable activities. Conversely the Government's decision to abandon the lone parent supplement must be influenced, if only subconsciously, by its disapproval of single mothers. Most allowances are made in response to what should be the overwhelming obligation of a civilised society – the alleviation of poverty.

A genuinely radical review of welfare policies has to begin with a new declaration of basic principles – the creation of a comprehensive benefits system in which entitlement is primarily determined by need. That requires more to be paid to recipients at the bottom of the income scale than those at the top. But to make the system acceptable to the middle classes – and to maintain their grudging willingness to meet its costs – they must receive something. Targeting is barely less expensive than universal payment and certainly requires extra resources to be allocated to the social security budget. But it is right and, if we are to help the poor, it is essential.

The bickering on display about the Dome is what's most revealing



A spiritual puppet for the Dome, from 'The Jesus Story'

Photograph: SHC (Channel 4 Wales), British Screen and BBC Wales



**SUZANNE
MOORE
MILLENNIAL
TENSIONS**

Will the views of practising Satanists be adequately represented in the great Millennium experience that the Dome is set to provide? Will Christianity be illustrated by anything more than a couple of dodgy looking puppets from the film *The Jesus Story*? Is this structure really big enough to house the male egos that are already having difficulty getting it up?

These are just some of the questions that have yet to be answered. Apparently, we can't be told what exactly is going to be in the dome as then we would not pay to go and see it. But ... come on boys, give us a clue. Instead Stephen Bayley flounders out of the project. Mandelson goes to worship at the shrine of Disney and wayward Tories call for the head of Sir Terence Conran because he has said that a dominant Christian theme would "be absolutely inappropriate". Things do not look too good.

Andrew Marr has argued on

these pages that the Dome has become a convenient symbol for anyone who wants to criticise officialdom or this Government. That may be true though we hardly need an empty tent in order to that. He has also said that it acts as "a malign psychic magnet" for all kinds of unease. If only that were the case. A psychic magnet would at least have some power. At the moment we simply stare at a circle of cranes in an estuary and wonder what fresh hell is this.

I am not against the idea of the Dome in theory. The puritanism that suggests all money must be spent on obvious social need has never been my cup of tea. Celebration, leisure, visionary risk-taking contribute in the end to the collective social good. I am then, I suspect, like many others, open to persuasion on this matter, yet dismayed at the sheer arrogance on display.

This is a top down project, which is precisely what is causing so many of the problems. A few competing egomanias are deciding what is good for us. There is little sense of an organic project evolving out of what people want. We feel the whole structure is being imposed upon us and, naturally enough, resent such an imposition. Once more all the supposed PR and image making skills of this Government should be called into question. How have they got it so wrong?

Why do they continue to insist the nation is excited about something it clearly isn't. I have not heard one enthusiastic conversation about the project, except by those somehow involved.

Part of the problem of course is that, in the normal run of events, buildings are built because there is a specific need for them to exist, to house people or things that need to be housed. The Dome, on the other hand, is being created in a vacuum: it is being built; therefore a need must be found for it to exist. This is why its impermanence is such a problem, not only environmentally but because it adds to the half-baked and wasteful feel of the whole enterprise. The other difficulty is to do with the abstract nature of what we are being asked to celebrate and vicariously participate in: "time", "the future", "the place in which we are all going to live" sound so vague that they are virtually meaningless. What all this boils down to, when one asks how well these things are brought to life, is one thing: technology.

The squabbles about "Conran or Christ", whether God or Mammon will fill the Dome seem strangely anachronistic. If the Dome's purpose is to reflect our self-image then it will need to be that of a largely secular nation with pockets of faith here and there, a quick nod to Christianity perhaps but that's about it. Another kind of faith already dominates thinking behind the Dome, faith in design and technology, a faith that is being so badly communicated by its believers.

For communication is the crux of the matter. I hate to draw attention to the obvious point, but as we are left with little to do but gawp at a circular

building site and witness the daily jostling of male egos, one wonders where the female input is into this millennial vision. Where are the voices that wish to include rather than exclude us from this precious vision?

Whereas the discussions about the best way to commemorate Diana's life proceed from a perceived need to produce something lasting, a response to the populist feeling about what she represented, the Dome continues to proceed from the opposite position. I never understood why Diana could not just be put in the Dome – a way of killing two birds with one stone if that is not an unfortunate metaphor – how to fill the space and how to draw crowds.

One could argue that all visionary projects have to take off from a standing start, but it is not true that all of them are met with such overwhelming apathy. It is possible to excite and stimulate even the jaded citizens of the late twentieth century. The new Guggenheim built by Frank Gehry in Bilbao for a fraction of the price of the Dome is modern wonder of the world. Those of us who have never once thought of visiting Bilbao want to see this beautiful piece of architecture. Show a classroom of children a picture of this museum and they ooh and aah. They have simply never seen anything like it. It exists not only as a sight in itself but has a clearly defined,

purpose. No one will be asking to pull it down in twenty years time.

Alas it is too late for us to have a structure of equivalent beauty. We have instead opted for something far more expensive and far less architecturally risky. The bravest thing to do would be leave to the Dome empty to create a cathedral of space. Everyone could then see exactly what they wanted to see for the future.

As this looks unlikely it is now up to the Dome heads to act far less loftily and actually begin to talk to us instead of to each other. If the future will be defined by new methods of communication that in their way produce new kinds of community, then how come the whole thing is already being talked of as a massive failure of communication?

Mandelson et al may have faith in the fickleness of the public: one day they say they don't want something, the next they queue up for hours to visit it. What they seem to lack faith in is any idea of consultation and democracy – beyond bloody focus groups. Perhaps that's why the future feels like it's already been sewn up. It's too late to ask for your cash back. Instead you are expected to pay good money to glimpse someone else's vision of the future. You can look but don't touch. You can take a guided tour through it. Just don't ask to be actually included in it.

Beware: the business cycle has not been repealed



**HAMISH
MCRAE
THE COMING
RECESSION**

is the R-word – not the three Rs, just the one R – and it spells recession. One of the many signs of the present East Asian crisis is that when things are going well hardly anyone is prepared to accept the possibility that the good times may not continue. The longer the period of success carries on, the more secure it appears. Most supposed experts are loathe to sound warnings as it makes them unpopular, while those who have spoken out start to lose confidence in their judgement and shut up. A conspiracy of silence ensues, and so when disaster strikes not only does it come as a complete sur-

prise: it is very much harder to cope with because there has been no preparation for it.

In the field of economics the obvious, glaring issue which is not being discussed is the overwhelming probability that there will be another world-wide recession within the next five years. That recession will have a profound impact on relations between the big three economic regions of the world – North America, Europe and East Asia – and it will create great social strains within even rich and successful countries. It may, for example, be the thing that breaks the European single currency apart.

More about that in a moment; how do I know there will be a recession? Of course I don't know – no-one can. But anyone with any knowledge of economic history will be aware of the business cycle – that periods of faster economic growth have always seemed to alternate with periods of slower growth, and that these periods of slower growth sometimes slip into outright recession. Just why such cycles should exist has been the subject of endless study and conjecture. But we don't need to understand the cycle to acknowledge that it exists. If you bought a house in Britain in 1988 you don't need to be an economist to see what a business cycle can do to property prices.

So there will be another downturn. The next question concerns its likely magnitude. The conventional view is that any downturn will be small. In America people talk of "the new paradigm", an expression which I have never quite understood but I think refers to the combination of low inflation, flexible markets and great entrepreneurial zeal that is powering the American economy. My problem with this is that a lot of the arguments about the special nature of US

No one is discussing the great probability that there will be a recession within five years

economic performance may be right, but it is still possible for recession to strike. While looking around the world, I can see some reasons to expect a relatively mild recession next time. I can see more that suggests it may be quite serious.

On the positive side are the fact that inflation world-wide is falling, that there is a new burst of technological advance taking place, and government policies both in the developed and the developing worlds are

tending to improve. Thus we have fewer truly stupid, wealth-destroying economic policies than we did 10 or 20 years ago.

But stacked against this are several negatives. The most obvious is that the world seems to be making the transition from a period of inflation to a period of stable prices. In the long-run, a world of stable prices might be just as successful in economic terms as one of low inflation – probably more so. But managing the transition is difficult. We have

had no experience of this since the early part of the last century following the Napoleonic Wars, except the 1920s and 1930s, a period which was so dreadful that it doesn't bear thinking about. Disinflation can so easily tip into serious deflation and hence depression. It would be astounding if we were to get through this transition without some mistakes of economic policy: we just have to hope that they won't be too serious.

Next, each of the three big

regions has its problems. Enough has been said about East Asia to need no further comment. The region has somewhere between three and five years of adjustment ahead of it, and we should not assume that such adjustment will happen in the optimal way.

In North America the key problem is that despite the admirable economic performance the place is still running a large current account deficit and the US has become the world's largest debtor nation. Add to this the fact that US share prices are at exceptionally high levels by historical standards and you can see that the undoubted success has a certain fragility to it.

Here in Europe the problems vary from country to country. The fringe (which of course includes the UK) is in general doing fine, but the core is threatened by socially-divisive levels of unemployment. Further, Europe may well destabilise itself by choosing this moment to introduce a single currency. Leave aside the arguments for and against and look at the timing: if you wanted to choose the worst possible moment for an experiment of this sort, this is as bad as you could get. The new currency is being brought in at a time of the highest unemployment since the Second World War and all the uncertainty associated with that – and

at the moment when all computers have to be adjusted to cope with the Millennium bug. That bug does matter. Even if the scare stories – that for example 50 per cent of companies will go bust as a result of cash-flow pressures – are mostly wrong, even a few being right will be negative for the world economy.

So what will happen? We are clearly in for some sort of global downturn. I think, balancing the points above, that it will be a middling one, about the same magnitude as the early 1980s and early 1990s recessions, but different in its quality in ways I cannot fully foresee. I guess that the UK will be relatively unscathed, but I am very worried about the impact on Germany and France, societies which seem more and more fragile.

Timing? Here I have a bit more confidence. I think things will center on quite well, notwithstanding the chaos in East Asia, until the Millennium. And then there will be a flop. There will be some disruption because of the bug, and EMU, if it happens, will generate more. Above all, there will be a sense of anti-climax. People will have a party, then say "phew", pull back their horns, pause in their spending and worry about the future. Once they do that, things could head down quite fast. The R-word would be here.

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Double setback for Microsoft in internet battle

Microsoft, the American computer software giant headed by the billionaire Bill Gates, hit a big hurdle yesterday when its Tokyo offices were searched by Japan's Fair Trade Commission while in America it received an early setback in its high-profile court battle against the US Justice Department. Mary Dejevsky in Washington and Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo report.

The Japanese agency searched Microsoft's Tokyo offices on suspicion of breaking anti-monopoly laws by pressuring computer makers into pre-installing its internet browser - known in the trade as "bundling". According to FTC sources the Japanese arm of the company allowed computer manufacturers to license its Windows 95 operating system only on condition that they did not install Internet browsers created by rival software companies.

Microsoft spokesmen were unavailable last night, but company sources denied that Microsoft had broken Japanese law, and said that the inspection was "apparently aimed at gathering information in connection with the legal dispute in the United States". Microsoft Japan's president, Makoto Naruke, said the company would co-operate fully.

Meanwhile, Microsoft and the US Justice Department went back to court yesterday in the latest round of a dispute seen by the US as a crucial test of its competition policy in the new technology sector and by Microsoft as an assault on its commercial freedom.

The specific issue is whether Microsoft can be ruled in contempt because of what the Justice Department regards as its inadequate response to an earlier court judgment. This ordered it to supply its Windows 95 software to computer manufacturers without obliging them to take its Internet Explorer browser - the mechanism that allows access to the Internet. If Microsoft loses, it could be liable for fines of \$1m (£600,000) a day.

In court yesterday, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson sharply criticised key arguments presented by Microsoft. On three occasions during an opening statement by Microsoft lawyer Richard Urowitz, he challenged the attorney's focus on statements made by the Justice Department. The judge challenged Microsoft's claim that the Justice Department has been inconsistent in its demands for changes in Microsoft's marketing of its Internet Explorer browser. The judge suggested he would not accept Microsoft's effort to buttress its case by pointing to Justice Department filings, which would be a setback to the company.

Microsoft has also objected to the appointment of Professor Lawrence Lessig, a noted computer expert, of Harvard and Yale universities, and has made a formal request for his removal, alleging that he may be partial to Microsoft's chief rival in the browser market, Netscape.

Microsoft told Judge Jackson that Lawrence Lessig was biased against the company and complained that Mr Lessig compared installing a version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer product "to selling his soul, presumably equating Microsoft with the devil". Mr Lessig's comment was made in an e-mail message sent last summer to an executive at Netscape Communications Corp, Microsoft's rival.

The original order on 11 December to stop bundling the two products was to take effect immediately to prevent Microsoft from expanding its dominance of the browser market, which was fast becoming a monopoly.

In a move that clearly infuriated the Justice Department, Microsoft responded by saying that it could comply only by supplying an outdated version of its Windows program or one that did not work properly because the "integral" browser had been removed. It is this response that, in the view of the Justice Department, places Microsoft in contempt.

Microsoft will argue that it is being penalised for the success of its Windows program, that the browser is an integral part of it, and that the bundling is not monopolistic because it does not preclude other companies from marketing their own browsers for use with Windows 95.

Asian markets stage a comeback as IMF rethinks rescue conditions for Indonesia

Asian markets staged an impressive recovery yesterday, with those that had fallen the most making the biggest comebacks. However, as one ratings agency explained why it had misjudged the crisis, no one was viewing this turnaround as anything more than a blip. Stephen Vines reports from Hong Kong.

Asian markets recovered some poise yesterday, helped by Wall Street's bounce-back and hopes that International Monetary Fund-backed reforms would be firmly embraced as the only sure way out of the financial turmoil. Indonesia led the way, with share prices closing 8.5 per cent up as the government moved close to an agreement with the IMF, which yesterday eased the terms of its tough austerity programme.

The IMF's deputy managing director, Stanley Fischer, said President Suharto of Indonesia had agreed to "strengthen" the terms of the IMF package, without giving details. In return, the IMF will no longer require Indonesia to have a budget surplus, sparking expectations the IMF may be more receptive to changes in the conditions it imposed earlier.

Lawrence Summers, the US Deputy Treasury Secretary, said after his meeting with President Suharto: "It's clear that President Suharto recognises the need to take strong steps of the kind that have been under discussion with the IMF to create confidence and to build on the very strong foundations for prosperity that Indonesia enjoys."

The comments came as the IMF rescue package faced a fresh threat from an unholy alliance of left and right-wing politicians in the US hostile to America funding a bail-out programme. The Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan, was heckled for defending US aid to Asia by activists at a meeting at a Los Angeles community centre.

Yesterday also brought a mea culpa from Fitch IBCA, one of the main credit ratings agencies, which admitted it had underestimated the seriousness of South Korea's problems until it was too late. The agency's report said: "The lessons for rating agencies - and indeed



Facing the end: Philip Tose, chairman of the collapsed Peregrine Investments Holdings (right), and Francis Leung, managing director, talking to reporters at a Hong Kong hotel yesterday. Photograph AP

for international financial institutions such as the IMF - are profound because Asia-Pacific represents a new form of sovereign crisis."

The oversight had been to ignore the fact that a high proportion of South Korea's debt was very short term because its total level of indebtedness was low - lower, for example, than Canada, Sweden or Australia. However, the structure of the debt turned out to matter because of the weakness of the Korean banking system when confidence in its solvency crumbled.

Fitch IBCA also criticised the Korean authorities, saying they seemed to have been in "psychological denial" about the crisis and failed to take suitable actions.

In Hong Kong, shares were also up almost 7.5 per cent as interbank rates eased

and the market showed it was ready to discount the collapse of Peregrine Group, Asia's largest home-grown financial conglomerate, which was placed in the hands of liquidators Price Waterhouse yesterday.

There were emotional scenes in Hong Kong when the founders of Peregrine described how the Indonesian crisis had brought it down. "What happened was a complete meltdown in a country," Peregrine's chairman and co-founder Philip Tose said, his voice quivering.

Peregrine's managing director Francis Leung, tears streaming, said he hoped to keep helping China-related firms raise capital. Speaking in public for the first time since the collapse, Mr Tose confirmed the group's problems centred on Indonesia,

where it was hit by a bad short-term loan totalling \$265m (£164m) to a transportation company.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong market was buzzing with rumours that Mr Leung was talking to a number of mainland Chinese companies about taking over the still-profitable stockbroking parts of the group's business. Mr Leung refused to comment. Price Waterhouse said there was significant interest in buying parts of the Peregrine business.

While Hong Kong shares were staging a recovery, a note of caution was issued by Moody's, the credit rating agency. It said that it had put a watch on the ratings of the territory's biggest bank, Hongkong Bank, and its sister bank, the Hang Seng Bank, as well as Bank of America.

Inflation drops despite pre-sales price hikes

Some retailers raised prices before Christmas by the biggest margin for 23 years in order to reduce them for the January sales. But behind the seasonal ups and downs, underlying inflation edged closer to its target. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, asks what it means for interest rates.

Both the headline and target measures of retail price inflation fell fractionally last month, to 3.6 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively. The figures suggested that rising interest rates have got underlying inflation back on course for its 2.5 per cent target, if not quite there yet.

Lower motoring costs - with a rise in petrol duty in the November 1996 Budget dropping out of the 12-month rate - and cheaper clothing and footwear were the main explanations for the decline.

However, there was strong upward pressure in December from the biggest monthly rise since 1974 in the price of household goods such as washing machines and furniture. The Office for National Statistics said the pattern of pre-Christmas price rises in preparation for January reductions had been getting more pronounced in recent years.

For example, the price of household goods, which usually climbs in November and December, was up 1.3 per cent last month. This compares with a 1 per cent rise the previous December and a 0.7 per cent rise in December 1992.

The typical January price fall has also grown bigger, growing from a drop of 2.3 per cent five years ago to a 3.6 per cent cut last January. Retailers typically

raise prices again in February and March. The year-on-year rate of increase in household goods prices has picked up, however, climbing from 0.9 per cent in September to 1.4 per cent last month.

Despite signs that strong demand is raising prices in some areas, economists welcomed yesterday's inflation figures. The small reduction led some who had expected a further quarter-point rise in interest rates next month to waver in their view, boosted by remarks by one member of the Monetary Policy Committee.

Charles Goodhart told a House of Lords committee that the Asian crisis "makes it likely the extent of rate increases will be less than they otherwise would have been", although he was not referring specifically to UK interest rates.

Kevin Gardiner of Morgan Stanley said: "I'm not sure the good news will last, but the case for the Bank of England to wait and see next month has grown stronger."

This view was shared by the futures market, where gains yesterday implied a market expectation that the odds are now against another rate rise and that the level of borrowing costs will be falling by mid-year.

Although Budget duty increases for tobacco and alcohol, and some food-price and fare-rises can be expected to affect January's retail price index, the impact of the sales is expected to lead to another favourable figure for the target measure.

Separate US figures showed consumer prices climbed by just 0.1 per cent in December, making the inflation rate for 1997 as a whole just 1.7 per cent, the lowest since 1965.

The underlying rate increased by more during the month, rising 0.2 per cent, or 2.2 per cent year on year. But this was its lowest rate since 1965.

Conflicting Christmas message from retail giants

Two of Britain's largest retailers issued conflicting messages on Christmas trading yesterday as they released sales updates. Kingfisher, which controls Woolworths, B&Q and Comet, cheered the City with news of strong sales increases, which pushed the shares up 27p to a new high of 912p as analysts increased their profit forecasts.

However, Boots disappointed the market with lower-than-expected numbers. Its trading was affected by the mild weather and the absence of any flu outbreaks this year, which affected the performance of Boots the Chemists.

John Richards, retail analyst at NatWest Securities, said: "The Boots figures were not that bad but their rating now leaves no margin for error. At this time of year even the slightest nuance tends to be magnified."

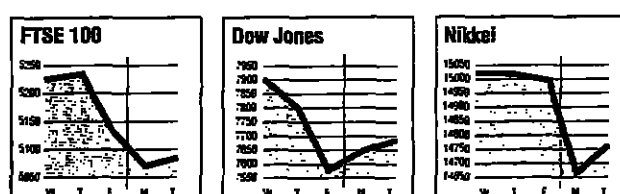
Boots confirmed reports of a late surge in consumer spending before Christmas. Group sales in the third quarter were 6.8 per cent ahead of the same period last year. Boots the Chemists suffered from stock shortages caused by a warehouse fire in October, though healthcare sales were strong. Halfords' sales were up only 1.7 per cent.

But the plaudits yesterday went to Kingfisher, whose shares have enjoyed a surge since a profits warning three years ago. Sir Geoff Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "We have had a very good Christmas. Most importantly Woolworths achieved another strong performance as did our two other major brands B&Q and Darty (the French electrical subsidiary)."

Kingfisher's sales in the nine weeks to January were up by 8.2 per cent on a like-for-like basis. B&Q led the way with a 14.5 per cent sales gain. But sales at Comet, the electrical group, only rose 1.3 per cent. This added to gloom over Dixons' half-year figures which are due today.

- Nigel Cope

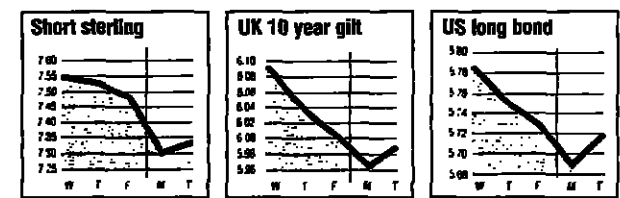
STOCK MARKETS



**Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm*

Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5083.90	15.10	0.30	5367.30	4056.60	3.46
FTSE 250	4816.50	16.90	0.35	4963.60	4384.20	3.22
FTSE 350	2452.30	7.80	0.31	2570.50	2021.30	3.42
FTSE All Share	2396.94	7.62	0.32	2507.68	2018.14	3.39
FTSE SmallCap	2240.10	10.90	0.47	2407.40	2182.10	3.01
FTSE Realind	1272.10	5.80	0.46	1346.50	1225.20	3.28
FTSE AIM	880.30	-1.30	-0.13	1138.00	965.90	1.09
Dow Jones	7582.30	34.88	0.46	8298.00	6556.78	1.73
Nikkei	14755.94	91.50	0.62	20510.70	14468.21	1.03
Hang Seng	8720.00	598.94	7.38	16820.31	7908.13	4.88
Dax	4159.40	72.12	1.76	4459.89	2947.31	1.74

INTEREST RATES

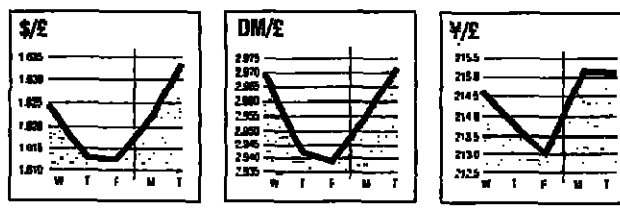


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.49	1.05	1.45	0.54	5.99	-1.57	5.97	-1.18	-1.18
US	5.69	6.08	5.65	0.43	5.41	-1.20	5.71	-1.14	-1.14
Japan	0.72	0.73	0.68	0.13	1.87	-0.71	2.49	-0.77	-0.77
Germany	3.56	0.42	3.82	0.50	5.03	-0.79	5.63	-1.08	-1.08

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Danka Bus Syst	262.00	17.00	6.94	Wolseley	466.00	-11.00	-2.38
Savoy	1272.50	82.50	6.53	Boots	847.00	-58.00	-6.85
Wimpey	108.00	5.00	4.68	WPP Group	253	-12	-4.53
Templeton	109.50	5.00	4.78	Silicon	138	-6	-4.17

CURRENCIES



Pound	at 5pm	Change	% Chg	Dollar	at 5pm	Change	% Chg
Dollar	1.6326	+1.11c	1.8704	Sterling	0.6125	-0.42p	-0.5886
D-Mark	2.9707	+2.23p	2.6611	D-Mark	1.8195	+0.13p	1.5886
Yen	215.04	+0.30	135.10	Yen	131.72	+1.08	116.47
E Index	103.90	+0.30	95.90	S Index	110.60	+0.70	99.30

OTHER INDICATORS

at 5pm	Close	Chg	% Chg	at 5pm	Close	Chg	% Chg
Brent Oil (\$)	15.30	0.37	2.58	GDP	113.90	3.70	3.34
Gold (\$)	280.75	2.60	0.93	RPI	160.00	3.60	2.25
Silver (\$)	5.59	0.06	1.07	Base Rates	7.25	0.00	0.00

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Treasury rules for ISAs may cost providers £1bn

The Government's plan to replace Tessa and PEPs is so complicated it will cost the savings industry an extra £1bn, according to IT providers. As Andrew Verity reports, companies will have to spend at least £1m each on computer systems to cope with the Individual Savings Account (ISA).

If the costs are passed on to the consumer, every ISA buyer will pay an extra £30 each, every year, to pay for administrative complexity, according to OSI, a management consultancy.

OSI yesterday said its price tag of £1bn was based on the cost of complying with the new regulatory regime. Extrapolating from estimates by its clients, OSI said life companies, banks, fund managers and PEP providers would spend £960m more.

Peter Elliott, OSI principal, said: "This £1bn will be an additional cost to an industry still coming to terms with the billions being spent on the year 2000 issue, EMU and the introduction of open-ended investment companies (Oeics). If the cost was passed on to the customer, it would amount to around £100-£150 over a five-year period."

The finding was backed yesterday by other big providers of IT services. Expensive systems will be needed to police numerous new rules. Those include

a £5,000 annual limit on contributions, a £1,000 limit on cash deposits, a £1,000 limit on life insurance and a £50,000 lifetime limit (minus withdrawals).

Stuart Greenhalgh, of Marlborough Sterling, the IT provider, said: "The issue is - how the hell is a provider going to manage all of this? It becomes even more complex - what are they going to do when people transfer their money or withdraw?"

"It is probably going to cost about £1m per system and with some companies it will be £2m to £3m."

The limits are understood to have been imposed by Treasury officials concerned at the £1.27bn cost of tax reliefs for the ISA. IT providers are concerned not only at the cost but the time scale.

Pollution targets may undermine coal offer

Eastern Group, the UK's fourth-largest power generator, could be forced to cut short a consumer offer aimed at boosting the market for British Coal if the Environment Agency pushes ahead with tough new pollution targets.

The generator will mount a savage attack on the pollution proposals in submissions to the agency, claiming it would have to import almost all its coal from abroad to meet the new obligations.

Jim Whelan, managing director of Eastern's generation business, described the targets as "absolute rubbish". He said: "This can't be consistent with the Government's drive to help the coal industry."

Under Eastern's offer, called Lionheart, it would buy 1.5 tonnes of extra British coal for every new customer it signs up when the domestic electricity market opens to competition later this year. But Mr Whelan said Eastern could only offer Lionheart for a very short time if the agency implemented the targets. "There's clearly a lack of joined-up thinking here. We can't buy coal if we can't burn it."

The targets would bring forward a planned cut in sulphur emissions from 2005 to 2001. The agency said generators could meet the obligation by burning British coal with an average sulphur content of less than 1.2 per cent. But Eastern said coal from RJB Mining, the largest producer, had an average sulphur content of 1.6 per cent.

- Chris Goddard

Fraud squad inquiry into City Financial

The Metropolitan Police is investigating whether to prosecute over allegations of fraud at City Financial Partners, one of the country's largest financial advisers. One of the firm's top salespeople, 40-year-old Jerry Robertson, has been arrested and bailed and is being interviewed by New Scotland Yard's fraud squad, SO6, over the allegations.

A short statement from the Met said: "SO6 is investigating allegations of fraud at City Financial Partners, based in Russell Square, WCL. A man now aged 40 has been arrested and bailed. Police will decide next month, when they next interview Mr Robertson, whether to bring charges of fraud. No wrongdoing has so far been established."

It is understood that the allegations relate to an account held with Fidelity, the US fund manager, in Mr Robertson's name. He allegedly used the fund not for his own benefit but to pay top-ups on surrendered policies which contained less than clients had believed.

City Financial Partners, seen in the industry as the epitome of a 1980s, sales-driven operation, was last month bought out by Lincoln, the UK operation of giant US insurer Lincoln National. Simon Ingram, City Financial's chief executive, is soon expected to take up a new role with Lincoln.

- Andrew Verity

WITTE

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Retail sector looks fragile

It has been a strange few weeks for UK retailers. In mid-December the doom-sayers held sway amid fears of a Christmas sales slump. But the first crop of trading statements from retailers such as John Lewis, Kingfisher and Signet suggest that the pessimism may have been overdone.

The question now is whether at this halfway stage in the high street reporting season, the mood has swung too far the other way. Christmas this year appears to have been rescued by a late spending surge and it is possible that the sales increases being reported may well have been achieved by offering big discounts which will affect margins.

Investors should note that groups such as Sears, Laura Ashley and Argos have yet to report. Sentiment could look very different in a few weeks' time. Most analysts feel that with higher interest rates biting, retailers will find it hard to outperform. Caution remains the watchword.

The sector already has a rather fragile feel. The UK general retailer sector fell by 8.5 per cent against the market last year, hampered by some truly dreadful performances. Laura Ashley was the worst, underperforming by a thumping 82 per cent, followed by Oasis (71 per cent), Harvey Nichols (54 per cent) and Sears (54.5 per cent).

Only two big groups managed double-digit outperformance - Boots and Kingfisher. Both reported trading updates yesterday and even one of this leading duo managed to disappoint. Boots' figures prompted analysts to downgrade their full-year figures while Kingfisher's bullish figures fuelled upgrades.

It seems clear that Kingfisher's B&Q chain is trouncing all others in the DIY market, hence the muted performance at Boots' Do It All. The Kingfisher-owned Superdrug is also recording strong sales gains, some of which may be coming at the expense of Boots the Chemists. On downgraded forecasts of £540m Boots shares are still very highly rated and there is no room for disappointment.

Kingfisher looks better value and Société Générale Strauss Turnbull now has a target price of £10 against yesterday's 912p (up 27p).

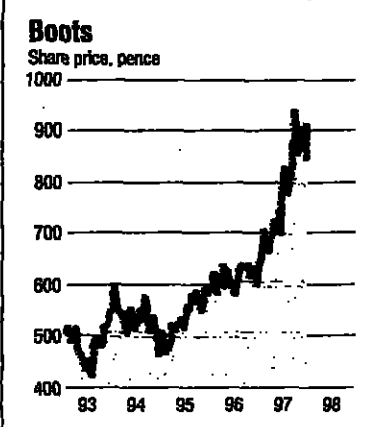
Given that the sector seems unlikely to outperform in 1998, investors need

Retail sector: At a glance

Christmas trading statements

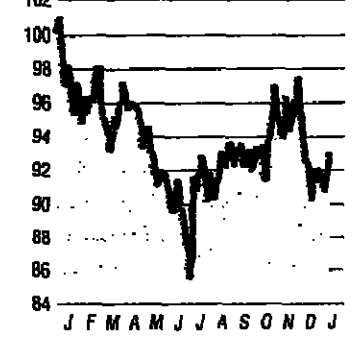
(Like for like sales to Christmas)

Signet	12% (to 3 Jan)
Majestic Wine	10.9%
JJB Sports	10%
Kingfisher	8.2%
Goldsmiths	7.9%
Burton	7.6% (total sales)
Boots	6.8%
John Lewis	6.1% (22 wks to 27 Dec)
Littlewoods	6.0%
Next	5.0% (high street stores only)



General retailers vs FT All share

Index, January 1997=100



to select stocks that could benefit from company-specific changes. Arcadia, the Burton multiples business could see an upturn after the demerger. WH Smith could also see demerger benefits. And Alders remains underrated, even after its good run last year.

SDX plugs into telecoms market

When the telecom industry becoming increasingly global, it's hard to imagine any small company taking on the giant equipment suppliers and winning. But that's precisely what SDX Business Systems, a telecom equipment minnow which floated at 160p just a year ago, has done. According to industry watcher Dataquest, SDX was the third-largest supplier of equipment to UK businesses in 1996, behind BT and Siemens, the German electronics giant. The year before, it was 11th. And judging by the 38 per cent jump in pre-

tax profits in the year to last October, that growth is continuing.

Credit for this goes to Index. SDX's new digital-switching product which allows companies to have voice-mail, Internet access and data transmission on their telephone exchange. The system is also capable of integrating a company's telephone and computer networks - the much-heralded "convergence" that telecom industry gurus regularly predict.

Hence SDX is taking market share - it has about 9 per cent of the market and can see that rising to the mid-teens in the next few years. But taking into account all the new features it is adding to Index, their available market is also growing at a fair lick. It also has plenty of scope to take its products overseas. International sales are just 11 per cent of the total. If SDX can find the right partners in the US, France and Germany that should rise rapidly.

So far, SDX has escaped the attention of the big boys by sticking to small and medium-sized firms, which

means no more than 300 extensions on the telephone system. The danger is that as it becomes larger competitors will sit up and take notice. But on profit forecasts of £5.3m the shares, down 1.5p to 229p yesterday, are on a forward multiple of 23. For this impressive little business, that's worth paying.

Investors keen to book in at Jurys

Judging by the strength of the Irish economy, it is easy to see why investors are keen to book into Jurys Hotel at the moment. Shares in the Dublin-based hotel operator jumped 27.5p to a new peak of 400p following a 26 per cent increase in turnover and a 36 per cent rise in pre-tax profit to £10.76m (£9.10m), comfortably above forecasts, for the six months to 31 October.

Now it plans an assault on the UK market, which is also going great guns at the moment. Its next hotel is due to open in fashionable Islington in May. A 190-bed conversion in Edinburgh is due to open this summer, and a proposed 250-bed development in Manchester is awaiting planning permission. When these are completed up to two-fifths of the business could come from the UK.

Turnover benefited from the buoyant hotel sector both sides of the Irish Sea and its rapid opening programme. Margins were fattened by an average 8 per cent rise in room rates on an occupancy rate marginally up on last year at 82 per cent. The figures also benefit from the strength of sterling, which added about £300,000 in the half year and should continue to help profits.

Brokers in Dublin have revised full-year forecasts upwards from £16.5m to around £17.6m for the year to April followed by £19.7m and in 1998-99. That puts the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 13 falling to 11. The hotel market is notoriously cyclical but does not look like running out of steam for some while.

Jurys is tightly held, with more than 60 per cent in the hands of the 10 largest holders, which often makes share price movements lumpy. However, the stock does not look expensive. Buy.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



Good to hear that Graham Ward, the former Oxford boxing blue, is set to be president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales in the year 2000.

Perhaps the 45-year-old Price Waterhouse partner should rename himself "Millennium" Ward. Under the Institute's arcane rules, once someone is nominated by the eight-strong council to become vice-president, they then automatically become deputy president a year later and full president the year after that.

A spokeswoman for the Institute commented: "Mr Ward will have to box clever with Dame Sheila Masters, the current vice-president," referring to the bitter election the duo fought last year, which she won. The spokeswoman added: "He's quite a heavyweight."

Mr Ward, currently deputy chairman of PW's World Energy Group, is confident that any friction with Dame Sheila last year is over. "We worked together at the London Society of Chartered Accountants in the 1980s. I'm sure we will do the mature, proper thing and work together," he said.

And his ambitions for the millennium? "To get a sensible outcome to the audit liability debate." Makes the Dome sound positively scintillating. He also wants to improve the public image of accountants.

"People tend to think that auditing is all about fussy old people in fussy old rooms," he said. Er, yes. Isn't it?

A former principal private secretary to three former chancellors, Nigel Lawson, John Major and Norman Lamont, has just been appointed director of the Treasury's Budget and Public Finance Directorate.

In a classic show of civil service continuity, John Gieve, 47, will succeed Paul Gray, when Mr Gray moves to the Department of Social Security after the Budget. Mr Gieve's new job is, very crudely, to help draft the next Budget.

Our man is currently the deputy director in the Treasury with responsibility for general

expenditure policy, including the management of the Comprehensive Spending Review. He began his climb up the civil service ladder in the Department of Employment and joined the Treasury at the end of 1978.

In 1982-84 he rose to Sir Humphrey status when he was made private secretary to the chief secretary (first Leon Brittan and then Peter Rees). He spent the following two years making money at Investors in Industry, now 3i, before returning to Whitehall as the Treasury's press secretary. Then came his period as confessor to successive chancellors.

Patrick Creen is off to do his own thing after six years with Adare Printing Group, the Dublin-based printing group which does most of its business in the UK. Although only 34, Mr Creen has 14 years' experience in the printing industry and is now looking for a UK printer to buy, for around £10m, according to colleagues.

Peter Lynch, finance director at Adare, says that Mr Creen spent most of his time moving around the businesses in the UK, where 13 of Adare's 16 businesses are based. Mr Lynch said: "Paddy's biggest success was turning around the Waddington printing business we bought from John Waddington. The Monopoly company. Paddy took it from losing £2.5m to making a profit of £3m in just over two years."

Mr Creen was made a director of Adare four and a half years ago. Before joining Adare he spent eight years with Clondalkin, a printing group which used to own a big mill in Clondalkin, Dublin, before the latter went bust.

Anthony Muller, senior vice-president and chief financial officer with the Anglo-American software developer Micro Focus Group, has resigned from the company to join another business in California.

Micro Focus has its headquarters in Newbury in England and its other office in Palo Alto, in California's Silicon Valley. Mr Muller is joining another, as yet unnamed, company with which he has been associated for around 10 years.

Micro Focus says it intends to announce a replacement shortly, probably with the annual results on 4 March, and during the interim period, the company's vice president, general counsel and secretary, Loren Hillberg, will assume Mr Muller's role.

Mr Muller was very much associated with Marcello Giammo, who was brought in as chief executive of the company in April 1996 to rescue it from drowning in losses. Mr Giammo appointed Mr Muller as effective finance director in September 1996, and then left last July after returning Micro to profit.

Micro's new chief executive Martin Waters said yesterday: "The company is confident that it will meet its revenue and profit plans for the remainder of this fiscal year and believes it will continue to grow in both revenue and profits for the coming fiscal year."

THE INDEPENDENT
INDEPENDENT

£10 Conran lunch

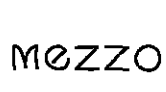
The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

From Monday January 5th until Saturday February 28th, the following establishments are offering readers a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10 per person.

How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an Independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

A special discount is available on selected items in the Bluebird and Le Pont de la Tour shops on presentation of the token.



Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill

The Independent offer is available at the following restaurants:

Bluebird 350 King's Road, London, SW3 5UU
0171 559 1000
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Blue Print Café The Design Museum, 28 Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE
0171 378 7031
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm*

Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill 36d Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE
0171 403 8403
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Mezzo 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE
0171 314 4000
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm
closed Saturday lunchtime, open Sunday 12pm - 4pm

Quaglino's 16 Bury Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6AL
0171 930 6767
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Zinc Bar & Grill 21 Heddon Street, London, W1R 7LF
0171 255 8899

The special 3 course menu is available between 12noon and 7pm between Monday and Wednesday the offer is extended until 11pm*

The offer is available 7 days a week at all six restaurants

* Closed from 6pm on Sunday Offer not available after 6pm on February 14

Rail chairman attacks privatised performance

John Welsby, chairman of British Rail, which is now a holding company for unsold assets, last night attacked the privatised railway industry in a lecture to industry professionals. Mr Welsby, who is advising the Government on re-regulating the nation's railways, said: "Performance, far from continuing to improve, has actually deteriorated. The failings are not isolated local ones, but are spread across the country."

Performance on many of the railway's highest-profile routes had been poor, he said. West Coast, run by Virgin, and Great Western, bought out by its management, had run fewer trains on time than under BR. The rail industry had to "start producing tangible benefits for the travelling public from the funds that are flowing into it".

Merger decision awaited

Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand, the accountancy and management consultancy firms, expect to be told next week whether the European Commission intends to carry out a detailed investigation of their proposed merger. This emerged as the firms refused to comment on reports that the Bank of England and the Department of Trade and Industry had added their concerns about the planned consolidation in the accountancy profession to those already expressed by the Financial Services Authority, and Iosco, the organisation of world stock market regulators.

German jobless figure up

The number of people employed in Germany has fallen to its lowest level since reunification in 1990. About 34 million people were employed in Germany during 1997, 1.3 per cent lower than in 1996, according to the Federal Bureau of Statistics. Unemployment reached its highest level since reunification, with almost 4.4 million people without work.

Northern Leisure soars

Shares in Northern Leisure, the nightclub owner, jumped 40p to 459.5p after it announced profits for the six months to March up 89 per cent to £7m. The fast-growing group is also raising £20.6m from a share placing to fund an ambitious expansion programme that is likely to make it the largest nightclub owner in the UK.

£150m PW case opens

Bank Austria, one of Europe's biggest banks, opened its claim for almost £150m in damages against Price Waterhouse in the High Court in London yesterday. The case, which is expected to last at least 12 weeks, alleges that PW failed to spot serious problems at Sovereign Leasing, a UK leasing company in which it acquired a majority stake in 1990.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Bespak (1)	42.3m (26.4m)	6.5m (5.0m)	18.8p (13.3p)	5.10p (4.82p)
Debenhams Treasury (1)	36.73m (30.30m)	3.16m (1.86m)	4.28p (2.44p)	1.3p (0.9p)
Debenhams Electrical (1)	63.26m (50.93m)	3.43m (2.4m)	13.66p (9.06p)	2.3p (0.1p)
Jurys Hotel Group (1)	167.1m (29.30m)	10.78 (7.92m)	19.0p (14.5p)	3.12p (2.5p)
SDX Business Systems (1)	45.31 (33.17m)	4.36m (3.18m)	8.4p (7.0p)	2.4p (-)
Shetler (1)	1.0125m (-)	1.82m (0.443m)	19.4p (10.29p)	(-)(-)

(1) - First (2) - Interim

Brussels backs S&N tied pubs

The European Commission yesterday gave its biggest endorsement yet of the British tied-pub system. Scottish & Newcastle, Britain's biggest brewer, has been given the provisional all-clear to operate a tie, under which it requires tenants to buy its own beers in return for lower rents and discounts. The announcement comes in the wake of the Commission's preliminary decision to allow Whitbread to keep its tied leases.

However, pub owners still face a battle over allegations by tenants who say they were forced to accept unfair ties. Brussels' approval of the tied system has proved unpopular with many tenants who are fighting a rearguard action to have the decision overturned. More than 90 of Whitbread's tenants are believed to have lodged a complaint to Brussels, claiming that figures provided by the brewing group do not give a fair reflection of the benefits available to them under the tied system.

Legal action from Intreprenur pub tenants against the tie is also set to burst into the open this year. Intreprenur, now owned by Nomura, the Japanese investment bank, has been forced to withdraw its application to the Commission to have old tied agreements ratified, due to pressure from disgruntled tenants who have complained vociferously to Brussels.

Julian Maitland Walker, a solicitor representing Intreprenur tenant groups, said yesterday: "We are hoping to put several test cases before the High Court this year. This [European Commission] decision does not vindicate the entire tied-pub system, only those that can demonstrate that benefits available compensate fully for having the tie."

However, the decision is good news for small brewers and hundreds of village pubs which, according to the Campaign for Real Ale, could have gone out of business if the tied system was outlawed.

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British Midland wants BA slots to go to European rivals

British Midland yesterday called on Brussels to force British Airways and American Airlines to hand over slots at Heathrow to rival European airlines as the price for allowing their transatlantic alliance to proceed.

In a letter to Karel Van Miert, the European Competition Commissioner, British Midland's chairman, Sir Michael Bishop, said if the tie-up went ahead it was important to preserve competition on both transatlantic and European routes.

The European Commission is expected to require BA-AA to surrender about 250 take-off and landing slots in return for approving the alliance. The UK's Office of Fair Trading has recommended that the two carriers give up 168 slots to enable rival transatlantic carriers to start competing services.

Sir Michael said the difference between the two - 82 slots or enough capacity to operate five extra round trips a day from Heathrow - should be allocated to carriers operating European routes.

He argued that unless there were more European feeder services into Heathrow, there would not be sufficient numbers of passengers to support new airlines entering the US-Heathrow market in competition to BA-AA.

Sir Michael also claimed that whereas many transatlantic routes were already highly competitive, with four airlines vying for passengers, some European routes were less well served. For instance, only one other flag carrier competes with BA on services from Heathrow to Rome, Fiumicino, Milan and Munich.

- Michael Harrison

Dollar		Sterling		D-Mark	
3 month	Spot	1 month	3 month	Spot	3 month
25098	15.47	15.47	15.47	0.584	0.584
20808	12.81	12.81	12.81	0.703	0.703
80.71	37.575	37.505	37.505	20.87	20.87
23288	14357	14351	14322	0.781	0.781
112.22	63.953	63.948	63.963	3.877	3.877
14826	10332	10386	10388	18.018	18.018
88879	55338	55027	54768	13.478	13.478
5889	80668	80687	80687	10.000	10.000
23449	18217	18181	18125	10.000	10.000
48111	26737	25902	25632	16.773	16.773
12363	7780	7780	7780	17.656	17.656
13809	13675	13675	13675	17.656	17.656
23564	19252	19355	19355	17.656	17.656
21338	1317	1317	1317	25.226	25.226
74767	43563	43563	43563	4.887	4.887
33172	21059	20488	20488	17.656	17.656
92552	12788	12788	12788	17.656	17.656
12.76	72546	72546	72546	17.656	17.656
30209	88.28	88.28	88.28	20.87	20.87
13330	3.763	3.763	3.763	20.87	20.87
25029	17559	17559	17559	2.713	2.713
82898	43757	50205	50205	54.725	54.725
2234	24.23	24.23	24.23	4.622	4.622
13001	80.80	80.80	80.80	0.919	0.919
23781	14772	14772	14772	0.540	0.540
	10000	10000	10000		

Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
10000	Oman	0.6282	0.3850
10000	Pakistan	710.01	44.000
10000	Philippines	0.1629	0.000
10000	Poland	5.7804	3.5300
10000	Qatar	5.9407	3.6405
10000	Russia	994.7	578.0
10000	South Korea	5.7804	1782.00
10000	Taiwan	26.054	3.4330
10000	Thailand	58.079	53.975
10000	Turkey	34.9389	0.000
10000	UAE	5.9830	3.6725

US	Prime	5.00%	Japan	Discount	0.50%
4.75	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	Discount	2.75%
8.00%	Fed Funds	5.44%	Central	Discount	3.30%
10.00%	Spain	4.75%	Switzerland	Discount	2.88%
10.00%	10-1 Repo	4.35%	Lombard	Discount	2.00%
10.00%	Sweden				
10.00%	Rapo(40)				

chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
491	-0.02	538	0.01	558	0.02	0.00
311	-0.03	458	0.01	535	0.00	0.00
475	0.04	532	0.03	539	0.00	0.00
420	-0.02	468	0.01	516	0.00	0.00
389	0.01	447	0.01	506	0.00	0.00
336	0.00	435	0.01	500	0.00	0.00
304	0.01	487	0.01	542	0.00	0.00
101	0.06	0.01	1.4	0.01	1.87	0.01
02	387	-0.04	448	-0.04	501	-0.02
01	436	-0.01	472	0.02	531	-0.02
101	484	0.03	521	0.02	536	-0.01
008	135	0.04	2.21	0.04	3.31	0.02
100	657	0.04	6.25	0.05	5.99	0.02
008	534	0.07	8.29	0.07	5.42	0.00

Weeks	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
	726	720	726	687

731	725	734	734	734	731	738
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720	722	723	725	727	
730	732	733	735	737	738 739
532			535		
415	425	430	431	422 438	

	High	Low	Est floor volume	Open interest
12405	12347		77650	93582
10650	10613		22404	255623
17085			65955	104363
103336	103224		762	-
9257	9239		2770	14590
8281	8274		38561	12169
9838	9832		47730	354612
9627	9639		61037	34657
9454	9447		40534	161226
9536	9529		34323	176709
9648	9641		13360	76557
9838	9830		9595	37481
9586	9585		547	9169
9573	9567		708	6554
				55623

Option

	Dec Call	Put	Jan Call	Put	Feb Call	Put
-	-	-	121	21	304	134
-	-	-	152	32	270	125
-	-	-	75	46	238	172
-	-	-	49	69	207	152

Goldman Sachs			Citigroup		
Chg	%chg	31 Dec	Chg	%chg	31 Dec
2.26	1.41	25.26	-2.17	-2.17	
4.83	2.16	23.03	-2.28	-2.28	
1.33	1.59	59.36	-	-	
0.00	0.00	168.79	-1.15	-1.15	
-0.10	-0.06	89.13	-1.33	-1.33	
0.10	0.10	16.03	-	-	

* prices at 5:30pm						
WTI Crude(\$/barrel)			Products(\$/tonne)			
kg	Vol	NYM	Last	Chg	Spot CIF	NW Eur
100	1075	Jan	83.9		Gasoline	95.50
100	546	Feb	87.77		Naphtha	95.00
37	305	Mar	85.6		Gasoil	94.50
		Apr	79.2	0.23	Fuel Oil (3.5%)	73.00

Chgo	3 month	Chg	LMSE stocks	Chg
330	501	502	295	817750
500	1840	1542	7	42890
510	1741	1742	51	340775
850	545	548	0.5	160000
4500	5720	5730	40	65658
10000	5225	5220	90	13045
3300	108	109	32	491500

1/2% per oz		Coins (\$)		Days's W's	
Jan	Year's	200	210	200	210
Jan	22.65	-0.25	5.10	Kingdoms	29825 -5410
Jun	14.00	5.95	6750	Sovs	6739
3/42	-0.01	0.58	0.58	Nobles	35806
				Napre Last	30315 -62.85

* at 5:30pm		
Barley	Potatoes	Leg Potatoes
UFFE	UFFE	UFFE
20.00	Mar/88	85.00
78.25	Apr/88	106.00
77.25	Mar/88	175.00
Vol	Vol	Vol
		65
		Vol
		91228
UFFE	UFFE	UFFE
Stons	CBOT	CBOT
78.20	Mar/88	257.25

[illegible]

Sell	Buy	Yld	Fund	Sell	Buy	Yld	Fund	Sell	Buy	Yld	Fund
30151	32060	3.44	Japan Grwth	72.55	77.00	0.00	UK Distb	926.00	94.00	5.40	UK Distb
68450	89550	4.23	Japan Grwth Acc	72.80	77.45	0.00	UK EurAltnAcc	135.30	14.00	5.40	UK EurAltnAcc
38380	390.70	4.23 X	Master Trust	78.67	84.78	1.21 X	UK EurAltnAcc	110.70	11.00	5.40	UK EurAltnAcc
7589	85.05	0.48	Master Trust Acc	90.31	98.08	1.21	UK SpclOppsAcc	155.65	16.00	5.40	UK SpclOppsAcc

100.20	105.70	2.37	UK Equity	20750	220.80	2.26	Real Estate	100.00	100.00	0.00
53.83	54.25	1.77	UK Equity Gwth	129.10	138.00	1.63	Europe	91754	91754	0.00
49.92	49.37	1.84	UK Growth	129.10	138.00	1.63	Europe Acc	5184	5184	0.00
843.30	838.80	1.20	UK Growth Acc	391.30	418.30	0.44	Extra Inc Acc	56.58	56.58	0.00
810.00	807.30	4.98	Wldwide Growth	579.10	619.30	0.44	Per East Acc	45.85	45.85	0.00
140.10	143.80	2.27	Wldwide Growth Acc	579.10	619.30	0.44	Fundof FundsAcc	80.02	80.02	0.00
207.10	208.10	2.70	M&G Securities Limited	617.10	651.20	0.59	Fundof FundsInc	75.81	75.81	0.00
89.87	90.52	0.96	AM&S Gen							

30.43	32.48	1.01	GrindvlyGenAcc	456.40	482.80	147	UKSmallerCos	126.71	141.51
25.00	33.10	1.10	Compound Grwth	1392.20	1395.10	199	UKSmallerCosAcc	141.91	151.51
29.05	31.00	0.00	CompoundGrwthAcc	1452.00	1577.80	198	Newton Fund Managers Ltd		
73.49	75.14	2.05	Corporate Bond	2913	2927	8.20	X		
			Dividend	53.10	56.20	4.31			
Charge 5% per cent			Dividend Acc	295.20	294.80	-4.31			
Charge 5.25% per cent			Equity Inc	380.00	400.00	-4.88			
Agns Ltd									
14.48	37.95	>20%							

70392	70392	717	Intl Fed Indent Acc	225.18	225.58	5.60	Growth Inc	198.09	198.09
78430	83388	038	Gold & Gen	31.20	33.18	1.98	Higher Inc Acc	54.38	54.38
71474	72152	2.98	Gold&GenAcc	40.20	42.40	2.20	Higher Income	42.90	42.90
21004	22813	0.25	High Inc	40.60	42.80	2.20	Income	350.39	350.39
70342	71782	0.00	High Inc Acc	163.30	164.40	1.10	Intl Bond	136.86	136.86
71924	72723	0.80	Intl Growth	87.00	89.00	2.00	Intl Growth	44.48	44.48
35148	37178	5.16	Intl Growth Acc	155.00	163.80	8.80	Japan	22.20	22.20
6423	5726	5.86	Intl Inv Acc	207.20	219.70	12.50	Oriental	95.22	95.22

67305	72016	023	Second Gen	63.80	88.40	3.68 X	Island Petroleum	76.82	82
67367	72013	036	Second Gen	239.00	252.80	3.68 X	International	294.79	31
67368	72013	036	Second Gen	71.00	78.20	2.56 X	Int'l Bond	129.53	13
67369	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Int'l Hedge	185.99	19
67370	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Japanese	61.06	6
67371	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Master Trust	154.46	16
67372	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67373	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67374	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67375	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67376	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67377	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67378	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67379	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67380	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67381	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67382	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67383	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67384	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67385	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67386	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67387	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67388	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67389	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67390	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67391	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67392	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67393	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67394	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67395	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67396	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67397	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67398	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67399	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3
67400	72013	036	Second Gen	151.00	166.00	2.56 X	Nth American	31.47	3

10321	10807	0.00	Cash	504	5000	0.07	Aaron Extra Inc	6652	1	
13809	14564	3.96 %	Emerging Market	7354	7825	0.70	Aaron Extra Inc Acc	9813	10	
20435	21438	2.58	Europe	12470	12940	0.28	Emerging Asia Acc	9813	10	
32131	33645	0.35	Far East	22391	23150	0.00	Emerging Asia Acc	9813	10	
8145	8438	0.00 %	Global Gth FEP	7091	7535	0.65	Eu Grwth	9813	10	
14025	14608	0.00 %	India	101	10730	3.93	European	47819	49	
12875	12730	0.01	Intl Growth	12520	14350	0.65	European Acc	47819	50	
13191	15645	1.47		8222	10000	0.21	Hong Kong	42550	43	

77090	8200	2.39	Bul Portfolio Acc	3980	1420	2.58 X	Swiss Equities	82040	15
			British Ship	2220	1260	2.55 X	Swiss Equities Acc	77190	12
			BritishShipAcc	16180	1790	2.55 X	Thailand	7275	2
			Cash	10130	10130	6.88 X	Thailand Acc	5832	3
			Cash Acc	15754	16750	6.88 X	UK AllShareAcc	5837	3
			Emerg Mkts	1680	2770	0.24 X	UK AllShareInv	8754	8
			Emerg Mkts Acc	16340	12950	0.24 X	UK Growth Acc	53570	14

2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964	1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940	1939	1938	1937	1936	1935	1934	1933	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927	1926	1925	1924	1923	1922	1921	1920	1919	1918	1917	1916	1915	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910	1909	1908	1907	1906	1905	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898	1897	1896	1895	1894	1893	1892	1891	1890	1889	1888	1887	1886	1885	1884	1883	1882	1881	1880	1879	1878	1877	1876	1875	1874	1873	1872	1871	1870	1869	1868	1867	1866	1865	1864	1863	1862	1861	1860	1859	1858	1857	1856	1855	1854	1853	1852	1851	1850	1849	1848	1847	1846	1845	1844	1843	1842	1841	1840	1839	1838	1837	1836	1835	1834	1833	1832	1831	1830	1829	1828	1827	1826	1825	1824	1823	1822	1821	1820	1819	1818	1817	1816	1815	1814	1813	1812	1811	1810	1809	1808	1807	1806	1805	1804	1803	1802	1801	1800	1799	1798	1797	1796	1795	1794	1793	1792	1791	1790	1789	1788	1787	1786	1785	1784	1783	1782	1781	1780	1779	1778	1777	1776	1775	1774	1773	1772	1771	1770	1769	1768	1767	1766	1765	1764	1763	1762	1761	1760	1759	1758	1757	1756	1755	1754	1753	1752	1751	1750	1749	1748	1747	1746	1745	1744	1743	1742	1741	1740	1739	1738	1737	1736	1735	1734	1733	1732	1731	1730	1729	1728	1727	1726	1725	1724	1723	1722	1721	1720	1719	1718	1717	1716	1715	1714	1713	1712	1711	1710	1709	1708	1707	1706	1705	1704	1703	1702	1701	1700	1699	1698	1697	1696	1695	1694	1693	1692	1691	1690	1689	1688	1687	1686	1685	1684	1683	1682	1681	1680	1679	1678	1677	1676	1675	1674	1673	1672	1671	1670	1669	1668	1667	1666	1665	1664	1663	1662	1661	1660	1659	1658	1657	1656	1655	1654	1653	1652	1651	1650	1649	1648	1647	1646	1645	1644	1643	1642	1641	1640	1639	1638	1637	1636	1635	1634	1633	1632	1631	1630	1629	1628	1627	1626	1625	1624	1623	1622	1621	1620	1619	1618	1617	1616	1615	1614	1613	1612	1611	1610	1609	1608	1607	1606	1605	1604	1603	1602	1601	1600	1599	1598</
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Country	Spot	1 month	3 month	Spot	1 month	3 month
UK	10090			0.6128	0.6738	0.6155
Australia	25161	25156	25098	15437	15440	15447
Austria	20909	20873	20808	12.811	12.807	12.833
Belgium	61317	61307	60781	37.575	37.505	37.385

Other Spot Rates					
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16318	10000	Oman	0.5282	0.3950
		1495	Saudi Arabia	71.901	44.000

Nigeria	122.39	75,000	UAE	59930	36725
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Interest Rates

UK	Germany	US	Japan
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Country	3mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.91	0.04	4.72	0.00	4.91	-0.02	5.36	0.01	5.68	0.02

Spain	4.45	-0.03	4.30	0.01	4.36	-0.01	4.72	-0.02	5.31	-0.02
Sweden	4.38	0.01	4.75	0.01	4.84	0.03	5.31	0.02	5.58	-0.01
Stand	1.31	0.07	1.64	0.06	1.35	0.04	2.21	0.04	3.71	0.02
UK	6.97	0.00	7.48	0.00	6.57	0.04	6.25	0.06	5.99	0.02
US	5.07	0.18	4.90	0.08	5.24	0.07	5.28	0.07	5.42	0.00

Eligible Bank Bills	720	712	723	715	725	717	
Sterling CDs	730	725	738	732	740	733	735 729
Eurodollar CDs	552		548		555		
ECU Deposits	413	425	419	431	422	438	

3 Mth Sterling	Mar-88	92.66	92.67	92.58	32165	14580
	Jun-88	92.60	92.61	92.74	36861	12169
3 Mth Euromark	Mar-88	98.37	98.38	98.32	47730	354612
	Jun-88	98.25	98.27	98.19	61037	346127
3 Mth Euroira	Mar-88	94.49	94.54	94.47	40834	148226

Liffe FTSE 100 Index Option										
Settlement Price: 5083.90										
Series	Mar Call	Imp Vol	Put	Imp Vol	Dec Call	Put	Jan Call	Put	Feb Call	Put

Index	1970=100	199.70	2.36	1.41	216.26	-27.17
Agricultural	1970=100	225.95	4.83	2.18	231.23	-2.28
Energy	1983=100	58.99	0.93	1.58	85.86	-30.83
Ind Metals	1977=100	149.63	0.00	0.00	168.79	-11.85
Livestock	1970=100	171.35	-0.10	-0.06	191.03	-10.30
Non-Fabric	1970=100	37.23	3.32	0.00	462.64	-18.60

Apr	15.87	0.27	5934	Mar	144.25	1.91	3055	Mar	18.96	0.28	Gasoil	142.50
								Apr	1712	0.23	Fuel Oil (3.5%wt)	73.00

Industrial Metals

LPG	10643	10653	3300	1708	1709	32	491600	2425
Precious Metals								
pm fix/\$ per oz		pm fix/£ per oz					Coins (\$)	

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Lge Potatoes	
LFPE	£/tonne	LFPE	\$/tonne	LFPE	£/tonne	LFPE	£/tonne	ADA	\$/25kg
Mar98	1010.00	Mar98	1770.00	Jan98	74.00	Mar98	85.00	A Sec	889.50
Mar99	1010.00	Mar99	1770.00	Mar98	74.00				

Aug8	30600	Apr8	23500	May8	8300	Jul8	27925	May8	3600
Vol:	3775	Vol:	111	Vol:	621	Vol:	46306	Vol:	253

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Fund	Bid	Offer	Fund	Bid	Offer
100 Largest Insurance Funds					

Alfred Dunbar Donor Svc	1,041.90	1,041.90	Northwest Growth Managed	15,070	15,630
Alfred Dunbar Donor Svc	28.00	28.00	Northwest Security Managed	14,270	14,620
Alfred Dunbar Equity Acc	9,950.00	20,180.00	Northwest US Equity	9,770	9,890
Alfred Dunbar Gen'l Hk Inc S	1,000.00	810.00	Northwest United Managed	20,040	20,350
Alfred Dunbar Property Acc	1,000.00	1,592.40	Northwest United Managed	9,650	9,650
Alfred Dunbar Property Acc	75,000.00	78,140.00	Northwest United w/Profile	18,170	18,730
Bancine Equity Acc	13,070.00	13,920.00	Pearl Equity Hld	4,050.00	4,270.00

Black Wm Profs	16569	17620	Scott Mutual Salary	30800	33430
Confederation Equity Ser 1	29955.50	27320	Scott Provident Inst Blue Chip	12650	14720
Equity Ser Managed Ser 2	20000	22100	Scott Provident Inst Wm Prof	14200	15070
Family Partnership	42800	6220	Stock Widows International	59250	59170
Friends Prov Managed	40000	44200	Stock Widows Maled	60200	62560
Friends Prov UK Equity	66000	63600	Standard Equity	156120	164940
Friends Prov High Profts	23200	23400			

Professional Net Management	71140	22260	Sun Life/Canada Century Inc	26550	26550
Logan & General Inv Acc: Ser2	67860	18840	Sun Life/Canada Century Mgt	26950	26560
Logan & General Inv Acc: Ser2	62140	65720	Sun Life/Canada Century Acc	23200	26320
Logan & General Management Acc	71400	10100	Sun Life/Canada Mgt Acc	25660	26600
Lincoln (Lauri & Alfred) Acc	64870	36800	TSS Equity	40520	
Lincoln (Lauri & UK Eq Acc	39550	70380	TSS Homebuys	25610	31400
			TSS Management	37850	37850

100

MOTOR RACING

Honeymoon over as Stewart enters delivery business

Just one podium finish exceeded Jackie Stewart's expectations in his debut season as a Formula One team owner. Yesterday he rolled out the new Stewart-Ford knowing that a one-off result will not be enough this time.

A surreal combo of pipes and steel band had them grinning from Dunton, Essex, to Detroit, Michigan, and as a charm offensive might well have done the trick.

Formula One launches tend to be more showtime than substance, but behind this tartan spectacle was stark business reality and no one from the engine or car-maker was ducking the issue. The Stewart-Ford organisation has it to do. No excuses.

As Jackie Stewart, the leading light and inspiration behind the team, said: "The honeymoon is over. Now it's time to wash the dishes."

The Scot and his team unveiled their new, slimline car, the SF2, at Ford's Research and Engineering Centre, an indication of Ford's intensifying commitment and demands as Stewart-Ford embark on a second season.

A remarkable second place by Rubens Barrichello in the rain of Monaco gave Stewart six points last season, a result which exceeded their expectations for the first year and vin-

dictated the project. But the rest of the 17 grands prix produced nothing in terms of points and now the requirement is more consistent competitiveness.

That message came from Ford, who have pinned their reputation on Stewart, as the company beamed yesterday's proceedings back to headquarters in the United States, and it was reinforced by Stewart, who won the world championship three times as a driver. If he needed added incentive, it was provided by the clumsy request

BY DERICK ALLSOP

of the sport's governing body, the FIA, that he proved his team's financial capability of completing the coming season.

Stewart knew he would confront envy as well as the usual obstacles on the re-entry to grand prix racing, but this shabby challenge and blatant attempt to embarrass him following the withdrawal of a sponsor was a blow delivered even lower than he had anticipated.

Stewart has since confirmed new backers who will boost his budget to £30m. The workforce has been increased from 113 to 136 in the last six months and will rise to 170 by the end of the year. They are due to move into a new factory in May or June.

"What happened with FIA

has hardened my resolve in that we know we've got to deliver," Stewart said. "We have got to give our people stability."

"This is a serious effort, as you can see from Ford's involvement. There's total commitment all round. That increases the pressure, but it's the pressure we relish. "Everybody is assuming the second year will be easier, but from my experience the second year is harder. You have none of the benefits of newness, people are no longer prepared to take

"I would expect us to run in the top 10 and we've got to get in the top six in races. With attrition, you then have the chance of maybe a podium finish, although we shouldn't expect regular podium finishes. If we can take our points tally to double figures this year we will then be considered serious players. Only in the fourth and fifth years can we hope to compete with the front runners."

Retaining Barrichello, the Brazilian who was beaten only by Michael Schumacher at Monaco, was a straightforward decision for Stewart. Giving the Dane Jan Magnussen another chance less so.

"Rubens is in the top 10 in the world and he is so good in the wet I think he must have webbed feet," Stewart said. "But Jan was two races away from not having a drive. He has improved 300 per cent. The difference is night and day."

The test for Stewart starts with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on 8 March.



Venus Williams returns serve against Martina Hingis in Sydney yesterday Photograph: AFP

TENNIS

Williams and Hewitt rise above their rankings

It was a day of surprises in the world of tennis yesterday with Venus Williams beating the world No 1, Martina Hingis, while no less sensational was 16-year-old Lleyton Hewitt's victory over the men's world No 4, Jonas Bjorkman. Tim Henman was another first-round victor in the Sydney International Tournament, beating Mark Woodforde.

Williams, No 21 in the world but intent on claiming Hingis' No 1 ranking this year, managed to expose some chinks in her fellow teenager's armour and then said: "She was more vulnerable this time. A lot of girls are stronger than her and some are faster than her. But all the time she plays smarter than the other girls."

The 17-year-old battled cramps in the hot conditions but Williams was too strong for Hingis, who appeared unfit and irritable in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-5 defeat. Hingis admitted she was not fit and had played passively in the final set, waiting for Williams to continue making the errors that had littered her earlier play.

"But it's not disappointing because now I have something to learn from... especially for Melbourne," she said, looking forward to next week's Australian Open.

Hingis acknowledged that her ranking could be captured by one of the up-and-coming new players on the circuit. "It's going to be a great year in that so many new players are coming up - and you can't forget the old ones," she said.

Hewitt, dubbed the Australian "Boy Wonder", survived a comeback by Bjorkman to win 6-3, 6-7, 6-4. The youngster, who

climbed from No 550 to No 200 after winning his first ATP Tour title last week at the Australian Men's Hardcourt Championships, was 5-1 up in the final set before Bjorkman revived, but victory went to Hewitt on his fifth match point.

As stunning as Hewitt's performance was last week at Adelaide, where he beat Andre Agassi in the semi-final and Jason Stoltenberg in the final, the win over Bjorkman was perhaps even more impressive. Bjorkman, the highest-ranked player Hewitt has beaten, was coming off a strong second half of 1997, when he won three titles, reached the US Open semi-finals and helped Sweden win the Davis Cup.

Hewitt, the youngest man to win a title since Michael Chang in 1988, plays a baseline game similar to Bjorkman's. But on this day, Hewitt showed more flair and greater touch with perfect lobs and crafty approach shots. Bjorkman gave Hewitt no praise, saying: "It's tough to rate a guy when I'm not playing as well as I normally do. For the moment, anyone in the top 200 can beat me."

But Hewitt said: "I feel I'm hitting the ball unbelievably at the moment. I kept telling myself the pressure's on him. He's No 4 in the world."

Henman survived a test in launching his defence of the title with a 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 first-round win over Woodforde. The sixth-seed captured the opening set only for his form to falter, allowing Woodforde back into the game in the second. But Henman regained his composure in the third set.



Britain's (from left) Andrew Clayton, Paul Palmer, Gavin Meadows and James Salter yesterday Photograph: Reuters

WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Britain's relay quartet win first medal as Chinese founder

Britain's 4x200m freestyle quartet lived up to their third-placed ranking to take the bronze in a dramatic men's final yesterday, earning their first medal at the World Championships in Perth.

They only missed out on the silver by 0.5sec - breaking the national record they set when striking gold in last summer's European Championships in the process - as the Netherlands reversed the placings from Seville, with Australia taking

gold. The United States, the Olympic champions, could only finish fifth. It was Britain's first medal in the event at a World Championships for 23 years.

Paul Palmer and James Salter, on the anchor leg, both performed better than they had in the 200m individual freestyle. "We needed that medal," Salter said. "The team had been a bit down because we knew that we hadn't swum as well as we could have so far. But

this could be the performance to fire us up for the rest of the championships."

China's new swimming dynasty was showing signs of cracking under the strain of the drug controversy that has dogged the championships as their women swimmers - dubbed the "new golden flowers" before they arrived - wilted on the second day of competition.

None of their leading competitors reached a final, most

swimming seconds off the times they set at the national championships in Shanghai last October when the latest suspicions about drug abuse resurfaced.

Predicted to repeat their sweep of 12 out of 16 golds from the last World Championships in Rome in 1994, China have won a solitary bronze so far as the controversy surrounding the disgraced Yuan Yuan and her coach, Zhou Zhewen, continues with Fina, the world

governing body, still to announce their fate.

Shan Ying - coached by Zhou, who admitted packing the human growth hormones discovered in Yuan's baggage at Sydney airport - was hopelessly off the pace in the 200 metres freestyle heats.

Shan, who had attacked media coverage of her team after winning that bronze in the 100m freestyle yesterday, finished 32nd overall, nearly 10

seconds off her best. As Fina's doping panel failed to deliver its verdict again yesterday, it was revealed that the vials seized from Yuan last week contained unadulterated human growth hormone.

Andrew Thomson, the Australian Sports Minister, said that a sample testing of two of the 13 vials of the drug that were confiscated matched the manufacturers' specifications.

- Ian Gordon, Perth

SEDGEFIELD

HYPERION

12.50 Old Hush Wain 1.20 One Stop 1.50 Winter Belle 2.20 Danby's Gorse 2.50 Eireaspyr 3.20 Tindles Bible 3.50 Stylish Interval

INSPECTION 7.30AM

GOING: Good to Soft (Soft in places).
Left-hand, undulating course. Easy fences and long run-in on course of 500yds.
Course is 1m SE of town near junction of A688 and A177. Bus service from Sedgefield station (20m) to Durham station (20m). AD- MISSION: Paddock (2) (JPA's 6/6); Course (2) CAR PARK: Paddock (2), rest free.
LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M. Rowley 7/23 (20.8%), J. H. Johnson 20/15 (22.4%), G. M. Moore 18/14 (27.4%), W. S. 18/15 (21.4%).
LEADING JOCKEYS: P. Niven 5/27 (30.1%), L. Wyle 22/27 (20.8%), A. Dobbin 15/43 (25.2%), J. Siddle 14/74 (18.9%).
FAVOURITES: 2/1 (2.4), 1/1 (2.4), 1/1 (2.4), 1/1 (2.4).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Hyge Pines (12), Global Legend (2.2), Apache Rider (2.2), Ship The Builder (2.2).

12.50 MARKE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E)

(Div 1) £2,900 added 2m 5f 110yds

- 1 4-11 OLD HUSH WAIN (9) (C) (P) P. Niven 5/11 10.2 M. Foster
- 2 4-11 CHAN MOVE (13) W. S. 6/11 10.4 P. Taylor (B)
- 3 4-11 ONION (14) J. H. Johnson 7/11 10.5 J. Siddle
- 4 4-11 DANBY'S GORSE (15) M. S. 8/11 10.6 J. Siddle
- 5 4-11 KAYTON KIRK (16) J. H. Johnson 9/11 10.7 E. Callaghan
- 6 4-11 LARKIN LANE (17) M. S. 10/11 10.8 J. Siddle
- 7 4-11 WOLLEY STONE (18) J. H. Johnson 11/11 10.9 J. Siddle
- 8 4-11 RATTING THE WAIN (19) J. H. Johnson 12/11 11.0 J. Siddle
- 9 4-11 SILLY PUP (20) P. Niven 13/11 11.1 M. Foster
- 10 4-11 WOLLEY STONE (21) J. H. Johnson 14/11 11.2 J. Siddle
- 11 4-11 PHENAGANS (22) M. S. 15/11 11.3 P. Niven
- 12 4-11 OLD HUSH WAIN (23) J. H. Johnson 16/11 11.4 J. Siddle
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- 182 4-11 PHENAGANS (192

SKIING



Patrick Holzer, of Italy, struggles to stay in contention in the men's World Cup giant slalom in Adelboden yesterday. The event was won by Hermann Maier of Austria in 2min 20.08sec

Photograph: Claudio Saccini/AP

FOOTBALL

European MPs join Coca-Cola debate

Members of the European Parliament are stepping up the pressure to overturn a Uefa decision banning the winners of the Coca-Cola Cup from competing in the Uefa Cup.

A European Parliament vote today is expected to demand legal action against European football's governing body unless there is a change of heart. A resolution tabled by two British MEPs says the Uefa move is "an abuse of a dominant position" contrary to EU rules. Two Labour Euro-MPs, Glyn Ford and Tony Cunningham, hope pressure from the Strasbourg assembly will help ensure the Football League can regain its Uefa Cup place.

Ford said: "If the European Parliament votes in favour of my resolution the Commission will find it very difficult to continue to sit on its hands on this

issue. They must rule that Uefa is acting against the spirit and letter of European law."

Uefa wants national leagues of 18 or fewer teams. "The decision to exclude Coca-Cola Cup winners from the Uefa Cup was taken to punish the Premier League for having a larger league," Ford added. "But it is clearly unfair to punish the Football League for something which is the responsibility of another organisation: the Football Association. I think it is against EU law."

Stefan Effenberg, Borussia Mönchengladbach's German international midfielder, has dismissed reports linking him with a £4m move to Tottenham.

West Ham have terminated their loan arrangement with the Portuguese striker Paulo Alves, who has returned to Sporting Lisbon.

CRICKET

West Indies wait on Walsh

There has been a week of guessing and counter-guessing since the West Indies selectors politely told Courtney Walsh that his captaincy services were no longer required.

Will the big Jamaican, so close to breaking the West Indies' wicket-taking record, continue his international career under the leadership of Brian Lara, or bow out four short of a century of Tests?

After Jamaica's President's Cup draw with Barbados at Sabina Park, Walsh, publicly at least, was still in limbo. A return of 10 for 102 in the match on a re-laid pitch provided further evidence that Walsh is still vital to the West Indies.

"It's a hard decision. I didn't think too long about it during this game," said Walsh, keeping the selectors guessing before they pick the side for the first Test in Kingston on 29 January. "Hopefully by Wednesday or Thursday, I'll be in a position

to decide what I want to do," Walsh said. He will tell the media of his decision first before officially informing the West Indies Board. "It seems that most people in the West Indies want me to play. Goals and records are nice achievements, but you've got to do something you can live with," he added.

While Walsh contemplated his future, Lara was going about his business in a big way. He sent a warning to England with a double century in a North versus South match in Trinidad.

— David Field, Kingston

Powell quells Namibian quest

The England Under-19 side scraped home by three wickets against the rank outsiders, Namibia, in the second round of matches in the Under-19 World Cup in Randjesfontein, South Africa, yesterday.

Chasing a modest 162 to win, England were cruising on 122 for 2 with the captain, Owais Shah, and the recalled Robert Key looking comfortable against a weak attack. However, a combination of bad shots and superb catching by the underdogs sent England reeling to 154 for 7 before the Essex off-

spinner Jonathan Powell on-drove Shaun Gericke for four to win the match.

Victory over Bangladesh tomorrow for their third win in three games would take England into the Super League stage as the Group Two winners, where they would almost certainly play South Africa in Cape Town in one of their three matches.

Put in to bat, Namibia were struggling on 21 for 3 in the ninth over after two early strikes from Paul Franks, who finished with 3 for 19 from seven overs. But their captain, Duane Viljoen (33), and Bjorn Kotze (38) put together a stand of 56 for the fourth wicket, assisted by some poor medium-pace bowling from Giles Haywood as Namibia amassed a respectable total. In reply, Shah was England's top scorer with 40 as they eventually struggled home.

WORLD CUP UNDER-19 group two (Randjesfontein): Namibia 154 for 7; England 162 for 7 (R Schotz 5-28, England won by three wickets).

RUGBY LEAGUE

Clubs refuse to alter fixtures

British rugby league will not revise its fixtures this year, even to fit in with the Australians in setting up an international programme.

The newly unified game Down Under is currently working out its calendar for this year, but looks certain to finish its domestic fixtures a month before Britain.

That has led to suggestions that Super League here should scrap its proposed three-week midsummer gap, which has been earmarked for home international matches.

However, the League's acting chief executive, Neil Tunnicliffe, said: "Clubs are selling season tickets like hot cakes and to change fixtures now would be a breach of contract with our supporters. We are also committed to setting up a Five Nations competition, in which this is a first step."

That may mean Australia and New Zealand having a

four-week lay-off before Great Britain could fly out for a triangular tournament in November.

The London Broncos are to consider playing their Challenge Cup fourth-round tie elsewhere in the South-east, in order both to spread the word and to avoid antagonising residents near The Stoop, who have complained about extra matches since the Broncos moved in with Harlequins.

The club has also asked Sky not to schedule them for home matches on Friday nights because of local hostility.

The Salford Scrum-half, Ian Watson, has moved to neighbours Swinton after seeing the club, for which he made 27 appearances last season, sign three other players who can play in the position during the winter.

He joins Ian Bleasdale, another Salford player to make the same move this week.

— Dave Hadfield

SPORTING DIGEST

SKIING

Fourth in a row for Maier

Hermann Maier surprised only himself yesterday when the Austrian won a giant slalom for his seventh World Cup success of the season.

The win in Adelboden, Switzerland, was the fourth consecutive triumph for the Austrian, who is racing in a class of his own — all four wins coming by more than second.

Looking more and more likely to become the first Austrian man since Karl Schranz in 1970 to claim the overall World Cup title, Maier left his teammates and Swiss rivals way behind. The former bricklayer clocked a total time of two minutes 20.08 seconds, well ahead of the injured giant slalom world champion, Michael von Grünigen of Switzerland, who was second in 2:21.32.

Paul Accola, the Swiss veteran, was only third, one hundredth of a second back.

"I surprised myself today," Maier said. "I can't believe I skied so well because I have not trained any giant slalom since Saalbach. But you accumulate confidence when you win and you just ski and take all the risks."

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

As simple as AFC for CBS

CBS, which four years ago lost its long-standing National Football League contract to its rival network Fox, is getting back in the football business. According to a CBS radio report, CBS Television will pay \$4bn (£2.4bn) over the next eight years for the rights to broadcast the American Football Conference games, wrestling the package away from another rival network, NBC.

NBC has been broadcasting professional football since 1965, when it was the network of the American Football League, and

held the AFC package since the merger with the NFL in 1970.

Negotiations for the Monday Night Football package currently held by ABC, as well as cable rights were ongoing. It was four years ago that Fox outbid NBC for the NFC package, leaving the league's original network partner out in the cold.

Unless NBC can land Monday Night Football, the recovery by CBS will leave NBC without live professional football on their screens for the first time in more than three decades.

TENNIS

Borg 'received tax-free sum'

A television documentary claims that the former Wimbledon champion Bjorn Borg received about £327,000 tax free from the Swedish government to act as a tourism ambassador in the late 1980s.

The claim was disputed by the former Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson. "If this was so, it was something between the tourist board and Borg, not the government," he said.

The documentary, broadcast on Swedish national tele-

vision on Monday, said the money was paid into Borg's accounts in the tax haven of Jersey.

The broadcast was the last of a three-part documentary examining Borg's career, including his troubled financial affairs.

Last week, the first segment of the documentary reported Borg had received about £135,000 to play on Sweden's Davis Cup teams, even though players were expected to participate without payment.

BOXING

Holyfield still wants unity

Evander Holyfield has blamed the US cable television network HBO for the collapse of his proposed heavyweight unification fight with Lennox Lewis.

Holyfield said HBO would guarantee only £50,000 pay-per-view buys for the proposed fight, guaranteeing him about \$15m (£9m) to £18m. He made \$20m when he faced the less formidable Michael Moorer.

"I was looking forward to [the fight]," Holyfield said. "But it wasn't so much the fault of the promoters or the managers as it was the network. If a network says they're No 1 in boxing, they need to prove it. They need to share the risk, too."

Holyfield is the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation champion. Lewis holds the World Boxing Council title.

Holyfield said he still believes a unification fight with Lewis will occur, perhaps in 1999, but a meeting with Mike Tyson could take precedence should, as anticipated, the disgraced former world champion have his fight licence restored.

Athletics

Mar Jones, technical director for throws, has been appointed chief coach to the British men's and women's athletics teams. Jones was chief coach to the England Commonwealth Games teams in 1986 and 1990 and the British junior team between 1981 and 1985. The previous chief coach, Malcolm Arnold, has taken up a new appointment at Bath University.

The British athletes Ashia Hansen, the reigning world indoor silver medalist in the triple jump, and Tony Jarrett, the former European indoor silver medal winner, will compete in the Bupa Indoor Grand Prix in Birmingham next month to prepare for the European Indoor Championships in Valencia.

Basketball

The Budweiser League announced yesterday that the All-Star Game will be held for the second consecutive season at Sheffield Arena, on 22 March. Derby Storm yesterday announced that their American caretaker coach Jeff Jones would stay in charge for the rest of the season, following the club's failure to hire the England coach, Laszlo Nemeth.

NBA: New Jersey 108 Toronto 100; Minnesota 93 Los Angeles 89; Milwaukee 101 LA Clippers 95; Utah 106 Cleveland 95; Sacramento 96 Phoenix 90.

Cricket

MTN UNDER-19 WORLD CUP (South Africa) Preliminary rounds: Graham A (Browlie) South Africa 263 for 8; Kenya 204 for 8. South Africa won by 79 runs; (Laraine), Scotland 192 for 9 for 3; India won by seven wickets. Group B (Pretoria): New Zealand 276 for 8; Bangladesh 179; New Zealand won by 99 runs. Group C (Boksburg): Pakistan 348 for 7; Denmark 71 for 7; Pakistan won by 277 runs; (Benoni): Ireland 69 for 9; Sri Lanka 82 for 5; Sri Lanka won by two wickets. Group D (Port Elizabeth): Australia 296 for 9; West Indies 228 for 7; Australia won by 71 runs. (Kimberley): Zimbabwe 192 for 8; Papua New Guinea 143; Zimbabwe won by 147 runs.

Football

The former Dutch international Frank Rijkaard has been named an assistant to the Dutch national coach, Guus Hiddink, the national football federation announced yesterday. Rijkaard, 35, retired following the 1994 World Cup finals.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Crystal Palace 0 Charlton 1; Millwall 1 Norwich 3; Oxford 0 Luton 1. AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD Northern Section second round: Postponed; Burnley 0 North County 0; Wigan 0 Rotherham 0. BELLS SCOTTISH LEAGUE First Division: Postponed; Hamilton 0. LEAGUE OF WALES First Division: Postponed; Bangor City 0. CONFERENCES VALMOUTH CONFERENCE: Spalding Cup quarter-final replay: Postponed; Morecambe 0 Grimsby. FA UMBRO TROPHY First round: Postponed; Altrincham 0. FA Cup first round: Postponed; Lough 0. FA CUP VALMOUTH CONFERENCE: Spalding Cup quarter-final replay: Postponed; Morecambe 0 Grimsby. FA UMBRO TROPHY First round: Postponed; Altrincham 0. FA Cup first round: Postponed; Lough 0.

WORLD CUP UNDER-19 group two (Randjesfontein): Namibia 154 for 7; England 162 for 7 (R Schotz 5-28, England won by three wickets).

Ice hockey

NHL: Boston 1 New Jersey 1 (ot); Pittsburgh 4 Carolina 1; NY Islanders 1 Detroit 1 (ot); NY Rangers 3 Toronto 2; Montreal 3 Tampa Bay 3; Chicago 3 Vancouver 2; Colorado 3 Phoenix 1; St Louis 1; Los Angeles 3 Anaheim 2 (ot); Dallas 3 San Jose 1.

Ice skating

EUROPEAN FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS (Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany) Ladies: 1. Tara Lipinski (USA) 2. Nancy Kerrigan (USA) 3. Michelle Kwan (USA) 4. Surya Bonaly (France) 5. Irina Slutskina (Russia) 6. Surya Bonaly (France) 7. Surya Bonaly (France) 8. Surya Bonaly (France) 9. Surya Bonaly (France) 10. Surya Bonaly (France) 11. Surya Bonaly (France) 12. Surya Bonaly (France) 13. Surya Bonaly (France) 14. Surya Bonaly (France) 15. Surya Bonaly (France) 16. Surya Bonaly (France) 17. Surya Bonaly (France) 18. Surya Bonaly (France) 19. Surya Bonaly (France) 20. Surya Bonaly (France) 21. Surya Bonaly (France) 22. Surya Bonaly (France) 23. Surya Bonaly (France) 24. Surya Bonaly (France) 25. Surya Bonaly (France) 26. Surya Bonaly (France) 27. Surya Bonaly (France) 28. Surya Bonaly (France) 29. Surya Bonaly (France) 30. Surya Bonaly (France) 31. Surya Bonaly (France) 32. Surya Bonaly (France) 33. Surya Bonaly (France) 34. Surya Bonaly (France) 35. Surya Bonaly (France) 36. 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Suspended Yates protests innocence over bite

Besieged Bath officials yesterday suspended Kevin Yates, their England prop forward, pending further investigations into the biting incident that left Simon Fenn, the London Scottish flanker, with a serious ear wound.

Chris Hewett reports on the latest developments in a saga that has shamed rugby.

Kevin Yates insists he is innocent of sinking his teeth into the left earlobe of Simon Fenn during last Saturday's Tetley's

Bitter Cup tie at the Recreation Ground and intends to prove it. His two front-row colleagues, Federico Mendez and Victor Ubogu, are equally insistent that their reputations have been needlessly dragged through the mire and that legal action is an option. This sorry tale has a long, long way to run.

Yates, a 26-year-old loose-head prop with the brightest of futures in Clive Woodward's England international set-up, is in serious danger of seeing that future disappear into the ether. Bath's decision to suspend him pending further inquiries into a grotesque assault did not, in so many words, convict him of attacking Fenn. However, the accusatory finger is now pointing in one direction, and one only.

Sensibly, Yates withdrew from today's England session at Bisham Abbey. He remains part of Woodward's squad – the national coach offered the player his full support last night – but will now concentrate on co-operating with Bath's investigation, led by Tony Swift, the chief executive. Andy Robinson, the head coach, and Tom Sheppard, the company director whose legal background makes him an influential voice in the matter.

After spending his early years in Canada – aptly enough under the circumstances, he was born in Medicine Hat – Yates moved to England with his family and learned his rugby by at school in Calne, a Wiltshire town close to Bath. A physically powerful and generally good-

humoured character, he broke into the England A squad for the 1995 tour of Australia and Fiji before earning two full caps in Argentina last summer. Last week, he made Woodward's squad ahead of several better known props.

Swift declined to discuss the possible punishments awaiting Yates should he be proved – he emphasised that the player was maintaining his innocence – but a two-year ban, enough to effectively cripple a vibrant young career, was being seen in many Rugby Football Union quarters as inevitable on conviction. The damage to Fenn's ear was far greater than that inflicted by Johan le Roux, the Springbok prop, on Sean Fitzpatrick in 1996. Indeed, it

looked considerably worse than the injury suffered by heavy-weight champion Evander Holyfield at the hands – or, rather, teeth – of Mike Tyson.

Bath remained adamant last night that they knew of no conclusive evidence against Yates and Swift insisted that the video evidence he had viewed showed nothing to incriminate the player. The chief executive was far more forthcoming about London Scottish's decision to cite all three front-rowers for foul play, rather than a single figure.

"We are extremely annoyed that London Scottish did that when only one player could have been responsible," he said. "The damage done to the reputation of innocent players is great. The club reserves the right to support

these players in any legal action they may wish to take."

Mendez, the Argentinian World Cup hooker, broke the wall of silence that had been quickly constructed by the Bath players in the aftermath of Saturday's match by protesting his innocence yesterday. It was understood that Ubogu, an experienced England tight-head whose lack of proximity to the Fenn incident made him the least likely of suspects, had consulted his own legal advisors.

"For them to have had their reputations tarnished in this fashion is totally unacceptable and we're angry, very angry, about it," Swift said. "If they want to take the issue further, it is a matter for them. What I will say is that this rugby club

will assist and support them if they decide to take action, just as we would assist and support Kevin should the evidence prove inconclusive.

"We've looked at one totally inconclusive video sent by London Scottish – we are still waiting for further evidence they promised us yesterday – and we've interviewed our players. We've spoken to Kevin on three separate occasions and each time he stated his innocence. However, we've taken the view that it is right to suspend him at this stage.

"He's extremely upset, obviously. Over the years he has been a fabulous servant of this club and he has a good disciplinary record. When will our investigation be concluded? It de-



Yates: Under investigation

pends when we get the evidence people are promising us." ● Worcester suspended the flanker Chris Scott from last night's Tetley's Bitter Cup tie against Bristol following allegations that he broke the jaw of Nottingham's Nick Carroll in a league game on Saturday. Orley have suspended the Western Samoan flanker Lafaele Filipo for a month after an alleged punching incident.

FOOTBALL

Fenwick pays the price at Portsmouth

The upheavals at Portsmouth showed no signs of stopping yesterday as the manager, Terry Fenwick, followed Terry Venables out of the door. Keith Waldon, Fenwick's assistant, will take charge of the team for tonight's FA Cup third-round replay at Aston Villa.

Fenwick, the former England defender, was relieved of his duties 24 hours after Venables, his mentor and chairman, agreed to leave the club, who are rooted to the foot of the First Division table.

The 38-year-old, appointed almost three years ago as a replacement for Jim Smith, guided Portsmouth to within three points of the play-offs last season and the FA Cup quarter-finals. But this season has seen a sharp decline, and the final straw was a 3-0 home defeat to Manchester City last Saturday.

Bradford yesterday wrote to

the Prime Minister and all 92 League clubs calling for David Mellor to be removed as head of the Government's Football Task Force. Mellor and the Bradford chairman, Geoffrey Richmond, have been involved in a row over suggestions made on Mellor's BBC radio talk show that race could have played a factor in the dismissal of the club's manager, Chris Kamara. And although the BBC yesterday released a statement attempting to defuse the situation, Richmond said: "I do not believe David Mellor is a fit and proper person to be head of the Football Task Force."

Middlesbrough's unsettled Brazilian midfielder Emerson has finally left the club. He signed yesterday for Tenerife on a four-year deal.

The Leeds manager, George Graham, has vowed not to buy any more players without an EU

passport after another argument with the South African Football Association. Lucas Radebe might not be available for Leeds after this weekend until the start of March because of his commitments to South Africa.

"It's getting out of hand. It's got to the stage where I have decided not to sign another South African or, for that matter, anyone else without an EC passport," Graham said.

Police have urged fans without tickets to stay away from Stevenage's FA Cup fourth-round tie with Newcastle. The Conference side were given the go-ahead to stage the tie on Sunday week despite the reservations of Newcastle and their manager, Kenny Dalglish, who were concerned about the safety of spectators.

But Superintendent Frank Clarke, the divisional commander for Stevenage, said: "Sky TV will be showing live coverage of the match so there is no reason for anyone without a ticket to go to Broadhall Way on that Sunday afternoon. They won't see a ball being kicked."

The French midfielder Emmanuel Petit has been ruled out of Arsenal's FA Cup replay away to the First Division side Port Vale tonight after having stitches inserted in a wound above his right eye. Ian Wright and Martin Keown are doubtful and must undergo fitness tests.

— Alan Nixon

Friedel may leave Anfield

Brad Friedel is ready to leave Liverpool without playing a game. The United States goalkeeper met the club's manager, Roy Evans, yesterday to discuss his future.

Friedel has yet to appear for Liverpool since his £1.5m move from the Major League Soccer club Columbus Crew as David James has kept a firm grip on the goalkeeper's jersey.

The United States want Friedel for the Gold Cup next

month and he has to go or risk his status as first choice. However, if Friedel plays it will mean he has no chance of accumulating enough appearances for Liverpool this season to have his work permit renewed.

The only solution for Friedel is to leave Liverpool soon, sign for either Rangers or Sunderland – both of whom have been linked with him – and apply for a new work permit.



The boys from Brazil: Ronaldo (left), and Roberto Carlos, voted first and second in Fifa's World Player of the Year award for 1997, pose with the Brazilian Sports Minister – and best of them all – Pele (centre) at the awards ceremony at Eurodisney. Photograph: Patrick Kovarik/APP

FA advised to protect game's integrity and reputation

The Football Association yesterday welcomed a report which called upon the game to "put its own house in order" before regulation was imposed upon it.

Glenn Moore, Football Correspondent, considers whether the FA have either the desire or the power to take heed.

Sir John Smith may have made his name as a Metropolitan Police deputy commissioner rather than as a professional footballer but it has not taken him long to grasp the essential nature of the game. Football is in the dreams business and his FA-commissioned report, "Football, its values, finances and reputation", is as aspirational as a 10-year-old's vision of playing for England.

While the report contains a number of sensible and overdue suggestions, it also has some which, though perhaps desirable, are either beyond the will or the desire of the FA to adopt.

Chief among these is the suggestion, prompted by people within the game, that "no person should own more than 10 per cent of the stock in any football club – thereby defeating the possibility of a single person treating a club as his, or her, personal fiefdom."

On the face of it, this is an admirable idea. Bournemouth, owned by a community trust, are the ideal but they are a rarity among the ples and private clubs.

Supporters of Brighton, Doncaster and any other club whose followers have been at odds with their board or chairman would agree with the proposal. But where would Newcastle be without Sir John Hall and Blackburn without Jack Walker? These questions are largely academic as the idea is a non-starter, difficult to enforce legally.

Almost as unlikely is the recommendation that the FA reforms its decision-making process. There are those within the organisation who have been arguing this point for years – Graham Kelly, the chief executive, admits the current structure "is not designed for speed" in this month's *Match of the Day* magazine. However, they have been unable to persuade the 90-odd backwoodsmen of the ponderous FA Council to vote themselves out of posts that guarantee them regular junkies and Sir John's advice is unlikely to make the difference.

Enough negativity. There are some practical and achievable recommendations. These go from the superficial, a code of conduct applying to "all aspects of the game under the FA's jurisdiction" to the hard-hitting – a call for an FA "compliance and monitoring unit" to "oversee the game's integrity and reputation" by monitoring finances, dealing with complaints and investigating irregularities. This unit would include outsiders with legal, accountancy and investigative skills.

This is long overdue, all the recent cases of alleged and actual wrong-doing, from the

George Graham bungs, the Tottenham illegal payments and Swindon betting incident have been exposed by the media. Such a unit would need teeth including the right to enter any club to scrutinise the books and call witnesses under oath.

To do this the recommendation that "agent's licences may only be granted to those who agree to be contractually bound by FA rules" might be extended to anyone working within the industry – if legislation permits. Other suggestions, rather than recommendations, are that directors should oversee the financial aspects of transfers (as is increasingly common) and that directors therefore should be vetted to ensure "they were a fit and proper person" to be involved in a football club.

Sir John said: "Recent inquiries by the Premier League [into the Graham case] and my own report into betting [after the Grobbelaar trial] have created unease about the effectiveness of the structures and rules which football has in place to deal with financial misconduct."

"Any company or business which hopes to remain successful has to tackle areas of concern about its integrity. Football must put its own house in order, if for no other reason than to obviate the prospect of public authorities stepping in to regulate football from the outside."

The FA welcomed the report and will review ways of implementing it. They are still considering whether to press charges on individuals following the Premier League's bung inquiry.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD
No 3597, Wednesday 14 January By Aquila Tuesday's Solution

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ACROSS

- One goes on the bottle as salary reaches ceiling (5-3)
- Disconcerted in ceremonial seat, say (6)
- Archduke, we hear, in revolutionary riot (4)
- Processed pear in fresh cheese (10)
- Flying linnet met in musty (10)
- Good string wax (4)
- Mate commonly in a church setting? (5)
- For example, London's main plot (5-4)
- Farm butter job Italy produces (5-4)
- At right-angles to length of aircraft, making Lincoln by morning (5)
- Superficially read second novel by Kipling (4)
- Chow-chow? (3-7)
- Operatic spectacles set by Handel, you say? (10)
- Previously-owned house-dog inside (4)
- Group of five shut up these days (6)
- Departures from sanctuaries (8)
- Blimey! Thin turn-out in Greek port (7)
- Too menial, sadly to be passionate (9)
- One in diplomacy is taken for granted (5)
- Noel's stage fun? (7,8)
- Barman rarely beats better half (7)

DOWN

- Feeling sorry for game in end of hunting (5)
- French dialect name given to everybody in court (7)
- Oslo cubes crumbled in stew at sea (3-6)
- One rook smoke-damaged? How annoying! (7)
- Creator's final blessing (7)
- What may come out of meal-tin? (7)
- Widow's contribution said to have clout? (5)
- Ant, for example, not caught in place within (5)

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD SOLUTION

Across: 1. BOTTLE, 2. SALARY, 3. CEILING, 4. KIP, 5. LING, 6. MUSTY, 7. LINNET, 8. FLYING, 9. GOOD, 10. STRING, 11. WAX, 12. MATE, 13. CHURCH, 14. SETTING, 15. FOR, 16. EXAMPLE, 17. LONDON, 18. MAIN, 19. PLOT, 20. FARM, 21. BUTTER, 22. JOB, 23. ITALY, 24. PRODUCES, 25. AT, 26. RIGHT-ANGLES, 27. TO, 28. LENGTH, 29. OF, 30. AIRCRAFT, 31. MAKING, 32. LINCOLN, 33. BY, 34. MORNING.

Down: 1. FEELING, 2. SORRY, 3. GAME, 4. IN, 5. END, 6. OF, 7. HUNTING, 8. FRENCH, 9. DIALECT, 10. NAME, 11. GIVEN, 12. TO, 13. EVERYBODY, 14. IN, 15. COURT, 16. OSLO, 17. CUBES, 18. CRUMBLLED, 19. IN, 20. STEW, 21. AT, 22. SEA, 23. ONE, 24. ROOK, 25. SMOKE-DAMAGED, 26. HOW, 27. ANNOYING, 28. CREATOR'S, 29. FINAL, 30. BLESSING, 31. WHAT, 32. MAY, 33. COME, 34. OUT, 35. OF, 36. MEAL-TIN, 37. WIDOW'S, 38. CONTRIBUTION, 39. SAID, 40. TO, 41. HAVE, 42. CLOUT, 43. ANT, 44. FOR, 45. EXAMPLE, 46. NOT, 47. CAUGHT, 48. IN, 49. PLACE, 50. WITHIN.

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